

THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #168, August 1 – August 30, 2011

A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

LEGALIZE IT!

How to Really End
the Drug War

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AN UNFINISHED
REVOLUTION, p4



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DEBT p14



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The Indypendent is a New York-based free newspaper published 16 times a year on Wednesdays for our print and online readership of more than 200,000. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 650 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. The Indypendent reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

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community calendar

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SUN JULY 31

12pm-4pm • Free
DANCE: BOLIVIA TINKU WORLD DANCE EVENT.
TINKU is an Andean traditional ritual native to the northern region of Potosi in Bolivia that means “encounter” in Quechua. The Bolivian community invites the international community in the tri-state area to this celebration.
Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens
718-592-9700 • queensmuseum.org

WED AUG 3

12pm-1pm • Free
ACTION: BIG BANK KNIT-IN AND RALLY TO SAVE MEDICARE.
Big banks and Wall Street crashed the economy in 2008 and left taxpayers to pay for the clean up. Join UnitedNY.org and others to visit bank branches at lunchtime with “Save Medicare” knitting circles. If you're a knitter, bring your needles and yarn, and if not just come out to support.
On the day of the action text BIGBANKS to 787753 for exact locations. Locations will be in Midtown West; Grand Concourse, the Bronx; downtown Bklyn, and Levittown, LI
212-471-1383 • info@unitedny.org

WED AUG 3

8pm-9:30pm • Free
PERFORMANCE: HIP HOP KUNG FU.
Dancing in the Streets explores how Asian culture, specifically martial arts, has influenced hip hop and vice-versa. An international group of dancers, drummers and martial artists will perform.
Asia Society, 725 Park Ave
212-288-6400 • asiasociety.org

THU AUG 4

7pm • Free
READING: *THE BEACH BENEATH THE STREETS*.
Join the authors of the book, Shepard and Smithsimon, as they discuss the activist struggles of different communities in reclaiming and transforming New York City public space.
Bluestockings, 172 Allen St
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

FRI AUG 5

6:30pm-10pm • Free
EVENT: TARGET PASSPORT FRIDAY: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.
Join the Queens Museum of Art to celebrate an evening of Dominican culture. Featuring dance performances by the Ballet Folklorico Group of the Father Bellini Association and a screening of the movie *Sugar*.
Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens
718-592-9700 • queensmuseum.org

SAT AUG 6

12pm-5pm • Free
EVENT: VAUDEVILLE FAMILY DAY.
Come join the Weeksville Society for an outdoor celebration with vaudeville-inspired steampunk-styled art and activities for families including open air art workshops, face painting, Vaudeville photo booth and horseback rides with the Black Cowboys Federation.
1698 Bergen St, Bklyn
718-756-5250 • weeksvillesociety.org

SAT AUG 6

7:30pm • \$10 Sugg
SCREENING: THE INTERRUPTERS.
This film tells the stories of three “Violence Interrupters,” individuals in Chicago who try to reduce the spread of violence that plagues their communities. Additional screenings of this film are throughout the week.
Maysles Cinema, 343 Lenox Ave
212-582-6050 • brownpapertickets.com

MON AUG 8

6:30pm-8:30pm • Free
DISCUSSION: HUMAN RIGHTS FOR SEX WORKERS AND TRAFFICKED PEOPLE.
Amnesty International USA and New York City Women's Human Rights Action Team are hosting this discussion on issues related to prostitution and sex trafficking. Melissa Sontag Bruno, a staff attorney with the Sex workers Project at the Urban Justice Center in New York City, will speak at the event.
Due to building security, attendees must RSVP at nycwhrat@yahoo.com.
Amnesty International USA, 5 Penn Plaza, 16th Fl
amnestyusa.org

FRI AUG 12

6:30pm-10pm • Free
EVENT: TARGET PASSPORT FRIDAY: EGYPT.
Join the Queens Museum of Art this week for a celebration of Egypt and Egyptian culture. Featuring dance performances by Zikrayat and a screening of the movie *Heliopolis*.
Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens
718-592-9700 • queensmuseum.org

MON AUGUST 15

7:30pm • \$10 Sugg
SCREENING: SUMMER PASTURE.
This documentary features the struggles of Tibetan nomadic community as everything around them urbanizes. Additional screenings of the film are throughout the week.
Maysles Cinema, 343 Lenox Ave
212-582-6050 • mayslesinstitute.org

reader comments

Post your own comments online at the end of each article or email letters@indypendent.org.

HOPE FOR 2012

Response to “*The Mass Psychology of Liberalism*,” July 6, print edition:

The long race certainly provides an opportunity to vet the candidates better. For that I am grateful.
— DANIEL DIXON

AGAINST AUSTERITY

Responses to “*Bloombergville 13 Released, Reflect on a Night in Jail*,” July 8, online exclusive:
Thank you for your great and concise article, and your work. I would like to add that the city's



AUGUST

UPCOMING EVENTS

TUE AUGUST 2 • 6-8PM

CLASS: BEGINNING SPANISH.
This 8-session course, taught by Jose Rosa, is ideal for those with little to no previous knowledge of the language.
Tuition: \$275

WED AUGUST 3 • 6-8PM

CLASS: INTERMEDIATE SPANISH.
Through the use of revolutionary poetry, literature and music of Central and South America students will increase their vocabulary and learn to express sophisticated ideas in this 8-session class, taught by Jose Rosa.
Tuition: \$275

SUN AUGUST 13 • 4-11PM

EVENT: THE DISSIDENT ARTS FESTIVAL: 6TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF PROGRESSIVE CULTURE.
This festival offers a showcase of politically progressive music, poetry and performance art. This year's performers include labor/peace choir the NYC Metro Raging Grannies singer/songwriter Judy Gorman and poets Steve Bloom and Jackie Sheeler.
Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$155

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WED AUG 17

7pm • \$5 Sugg
PRESENTATION: URI GORDON
“ANARCHIST POLITICS IN THE AGE OF COLLAPSE.”
In this presentation Israeli environmental and anti-occupation activist Uri Gordon examines questions around the prospect of industrial collapse over the coming generations, beginning with a discussion around the consequences for anarchists and their allies today.
172 Allen St
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

SAT AUG 20

11am-1pm • \$5
WORKSHOP: APARTMENT-STYLE COMPOSTING WORKSHOP.
NYC Compost Project will present how to set up and maintain an indoor worm bin. Indoor compost bins with worms will be for sale for a reduced price. Online registration required.
The Lotus Garden, W 97th St & Broadway
212-477-4022 • lesecologycenter.org

11am • Free
WORKSHOPS: FARMERS' MARKET AND PLAYSTREETS.
Hattie Carthan Community Farmers' Market is teaming up with Playstreets NYC to offer workshops, games and tours to the community throughout the summer. There will be a green thumb cooking demonstration, African drum class, chicken coop tour and street games.
Hattie Carthan Community Farmers' Market, Clifton Place and Marcy Ave, Brooklyn
718-638-3566 • hattiecarthancommunity-market.com

SUN AUG 21

12pm-6pm • Free
CELEBRATION: THE FIRST ANNUAL BED STUY PRIDE 2011.
Audre Lorde Projects' Safe OUTside the System Collective hosts a celebration to show pride and combat violence in the Bed-Stuy Community.
Tompkins Park, Lafayette Ave and Tompkins Ave, Bklyn
718-596-0342 ext. 11 • alp.org

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indypendent.org

budget (which UFT president Mulgrew negotiated with Quinn and Bloomberg behind closed doors late Friday night) has no official teacher lay-offs, BUT (big Butt!) about 2,600 teachers will lose their jobs to attrition. Wait. Isn't that, like, the same as teachers being laid off? All but in name. In short: Bloomberg, Quinn and Mulgrew will force 2,600 teachers out of their jobs at a time when we should be hiring more teachers, as small class sizes are the most proven way to increase the quality of education!
— BLOOMBERGVILLE 13ER

If 1 percent of New Yorkers are making 44 percent of the income, in a city brimming with multi-millionaires and billionaires (including Bloomberg), why not tax those folks in order to pay for needed city services instead of instituting austerity measures? You'd think an overwhelmingly Democratic City and Council wouldn't have much problem raising that kind of idea, but...well, it ain't so.

— CLOUDY

MURDOCH MASSACRES NEW YORK MEDIA



BY MANNY JALONSKI

Much ado has been made of Rupert Murdoch's ethical issues in England, with the conservative billionaire and his son James answering to a British parliamentary panel for News Corporation hacking the phones of child murder and terrorism victims alike. Less mentioned are

empire (Murdoch also owns WWOR Channel 9 based just across the river in Secaucus, NJ). His cross-ownership of both a TV station and a daily newspaper in the same city violated FCC anti-trust policy, so in 1988 Murdoch sold the *Post*, a move Alexander Cockburn compared to "Dracula selling his coffin."

While Murdoch turned WNYW into the

hegemony over political and cultural life here that he achieved in Great Britain.

In 2006, News Corp. also bought two weekly newspaper groups — the TimesLedge and Courier-Life companies — based in Queens and Brooklyn respectively. They were reorganized as the Community Newspaper Group, which now runs seven papers in Brooklyn and seven in Queens. When News Corp. purchased the *Bronx Times* and *Bronx Times Reporter* in 2007, its circulation of New York weeklies rose to nearly 300,000. That same year Murdoch made his boldest move to date, purchasing Dow Jones & Company and its subsidiary the *Wall Street Journal*.

Murdoch not only changed the *Journal's* style, but he also created a Greater New York section as a direct competitor to the *New York Times*, the publication he loathes and would like to supplant as the agenda-setting "paper of record." New York City has four of the country's 15 biggest daily newspapers, two of which are owned and operated by Rupert Murdoch. The *Post's*

circulation tops 520,000. The *Wall Street Journal* has the nation's highest daily circulation, more than 2.1 million.

In 2009 Murdoch once again extended his reach into local media, buying out the Brooklyn Papers, a newspaper group run by the *Post's* former Brooklyn Editor Gersh Kuntzman. Kuntzman, who had once decried the influence of "billionaires" in the local news market, was content to rejoin his former employers and increase News Corp.'s weekly circulation in New York to 340,000. Murdoch's New York City weeklies already show signs of falling in line with the *Post's* conservative, scandal-sheet editorial style.

Perhaps even more worrying in the long term for New Yorkers is Murdoch's increasing reach into their public school systems. The New York State Department of Education has announced that it plans to award a \$27 million no-bid contract to Wireless Generation, a News Corp. subsidiary, to gather the academic and personal information of students throughout the state in order to track their academic progress.

Local education activists have gathered hundreds of signatures on petitions urging State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli to nix the deal which they believe was facilitated by Joel Klein, the former NYC schools chancellor who recently went to work for News Corp. as vice president for educational technologies.

Manny Jalonschi is author of *Hustlers* and *The Idiot Swarm*.



Murdoch's stake in U.S. media, accounting for over 75 percent of News Corp.'s revenue.

In New York City, where his U.S. empire is based, Murdoch's creep into daily life extends even past possible breaches of 9/11 victims' privacy. In 35 years, the scandal-chasing publisher has gone from a new player in a rough-and-tumble media market to one of its most dominant and aggressive shot callers. Although News Corp. has scuttled its bid for a majority position in British Sky Broadcasting, no similar signs of retreat can be seen in New York City, where Murdoch's reach extends from television to cable to a wide variety of newspapers and now even public education.

Murdoch's foray into the Big Apple began with his purchase of the *New York Post* for \$31 million in 1976. Prior to Murdoch, the paper supported traditional liberal causes and featured writers like Pete Hamill and Eleanor Roosevelt. Under Murdoch's supervision the *Post* immediately converted into a scandal sheet with a far-right editorial line.

Continuing to add to his newspaper holdings in the United States throughout the late 1970's and early 1980's, Murdoch also sought to expand into U.S. television broadcasting. In order to comply with FCC standards for television station ownership, Murdoch became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1985. The next year he bought six television stations from cash-strapped Metromedia, among them WNEW in New York. The station's call letters were changed to WNYW (Channel 5 in New York) and it soon became the flagship of Murdoch's broadcast

centerpiece of the newly launched Fox Network, the *Post's* fortunes plummeted. In 1993, the FCC allowed Murdoch to repurchase the paper, saving it from bankruptcy and returning it to its former sex-and-scandal format.

Seen from a strictly financial angle, Murdoch's ownership of the *Post* has been a sizable failure. By 2005, industry analysts put the *Post's* annual losses between \$15 and \$30 million a year. The paper has also been a chronic center of controversy, hawking bigotry and Murdoch's conservative views. In 2009, for example, after the Obama administration passed the stimulus bill, the *Post* ran a much-reviled editorial cartoon featuring two officers with a smoking gun, standing over the body of a dead monkey, saying "They'll have to find someone else to write the next stimulus bill."

The next year the *Post* echoed far-right fears about a "mosque" at Ground Zero (in reality a sort of Islamic YMCA). Though this wedge issue lost its value after the mid-term election, and was summarily dropped by both the *Post* and Fox News alike, the *Post* used the uproar to repeatedly imply that Muslims were creating a 9/11 victory monument.

"News is not their first business," media critic Jay Rosen writes of News Corp., "wielding influence is."

New York City is the largest, most influential media market in the country. And, Murdoch's drive to dominate it from top-to-bottom accelerated during the past five years as he sought to establish the kind of



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Egyptian Workers Labor on an Unfinished Revolution

BY ARI PAUL

ISMAILIA, EGYPT — For 26 years, Mohammed Gharib Abdullah has been proud to be a mechanic at the Timsah Shipbuilding Company on the Suez Canal, a symbol of Egyptian economic and engineering might. He works in Ismailia, a desert city of 750,000 inhabitants near the midpoint of the 101-mile-long canal that links the Mediterranean and Gulf of Suez. In early July, however, Abdullah stood outside the gates of his idled factory. He and 8,500 other ship and port infrastructure builders were on strike, claiming that a crony of ousted President Hosni Mubarak reneged on a wage increase they won a few months ago. “Most of the laborers love their work,” he said. “All that we dream of is to live at a basic level of dignity.”

These workers are employed by seven separate subsidiaries of the Suez Canal Authority (SCA), which is headquartered in Ismailia. They receive on average one eighth the wages of the more than 10,000 workers who are directly employed by the authority, which facilitates the passage of nearly 20,000 ships a year, accounting for 8 percent of world shipping traffic. SCA workers and their families also enjoy government-paid private healthcare facilities and heavily subsidized housing, benefits denied to subsidiary employees.

Emboldened by their critical strike during the pro-democracy uprising that ousted President Hosni Mubarak in February, the workers struck again in April demanding parity with SCA workers. Suez Canal Authority chief Ahmed Fadel agreed to a 40 percent increase in wages and a 7 percent bonus, noting that the funds were already in his budget. But on June 1, the agreed date of implementation, Fadel reneged without explanation even though SCA revenues are projected to increase by 11 percent this year to \$5 billion. The subsidiary workers walked off the job, while the SCA workers, who are members of the state-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), rallied in support of their boss.

The canal workers are not the only ones discovering that despite the strong popular movement that ended three decades of Mubarak’s U.S.-backed rule, the Egyptian revolution is far from finished. Labor organizing is on the upswing in Egypt but workers are divided over political strategy while economic elites have moved swiftly to counter independent worker organizing and the governing military council is cracking down on labor protests. In Abdullah’s opinion, “Nothing changed at all. It’s almost like a counter-revolution.”

STRIKE BREAKERS

The strike in the Suez is one such example. Far from displaying solidarity, Egyptian Trade Union Federation workers were allegedly paid by the authority to attack striking workers, according to the news website Ahram Online. On July 4, 2,000 soldiers clashed with protesters in Ismailia, reportedly injuring dozens of workers. Union organizers say they have been subjected to police interrogation. And in mid-June, soldiers fired their weapons into the air when workers approached the SCA office to voice their grievances. “Why are peaceful protesters being met with live rounds?” asked Mohamed Hamzawy, a mechanic at the Timsah Shipbuilding Company.

Fadel is widely known as one of the many corrupt officials under Mubarak who retains his position of power. But he’s only part of the system that is still in place. For a true economic revolution to take place in Egypt, as

Hossam el-Hamalawy, one of the country’s most famous bloggers, has written that these types of “workplace Mubaraks” have to be thrown out by the class they repress.

Egypt’s history of labor unrest goes back to 1170 BC when tomb builders laid down their tools after Pharaoh Ramses III withheld their rations. Fast forward to the 1952 revolution led by Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Free Of-

Americans, that in post-Mubarak Egypt the labor code remained the same, with “all the rights for the employers and few for the workers.” A female worker at the Turkish-owned Mega-Textile recounted how a manager assaulted a striking comrade in April. Dozens of workers said that while they are eager to form independent unions, the foreign company owners threaten them with termination,



'A LIFE OF DIGNITY': Some 8,500 workers went on strike in June against the Suez Canal Authority demanding better wages and benefits. PHOTO: ROBERT S. ESHELMAN

ficers movement. Egypt began to nationalize major industries and the financial sector and establish state-controlled unions while banning all independent worker and political activity. After Nasser’s death in 1970, his successor Anwar Sadat opened the door to foreign capital and cut subsidies such as those for food, which sparked the great bread riots of 1977 that nearly toppled Sadat. In the 1980s, World Bank and IMF-led market liberalization surged under Hosni Mubarak who unleashed security forces against protesters. Structural adjustment programs enabled capitalists to scoop up 190 public-sector firms by 2002. Labor organizing revived the following decade, and from 1998 to 2008 more than 2,600 unsanctioned job actions took place, including strikes, sit-ins and rallies against low wages, employer abuses and downsizing.

Market liberalization has also changed the Egyptian landscape and society. Qualified Industrial Zones were created a decade ago, which grant generous tax, tariff and profit breaks to owners and allow them sweeping powers over labor. Sadat City, one of 10 such zones, is an industrial hub that sits off the dusty highway connecting Cairo to the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, and is home to textile, glass, chemical and steel production. In late June, a delegation of union officials from the United States met with organizers of new independent unions in Sadat City. While the Americans expressed admiration for the workers to mobilize in the face of repression, the Egyptians expressed fear and despair.

One textile worker, who identified himself only as Mohamed, trembled as he told the

demotions and transfers as scare tactics. According to the U.S.-based Solidarity Center, which is part of the AFL-CIO, independent unions are virtually nonexistent in the zones and workers are regularly forced to sign undated resignation letters that are used if they engage in job actions.

A TAXING UNION

In Cairo, independent unions, including 55,000 real estate tax collectors (which in 2009 formed the first independent union outside state control since 1957) and primary and vocational school teachers, have formed a new labor federation to challenge the ETUF. The upstart federation’s political demands are direct: End legal roadblocks to forming new independent unions, raise the minimum wage (it is around \$118 a month for public sector workers, although many teachers are denied full-time, permanent employment and do not receive even this paltry salary), and secure collective bargaining rights for these new unions.

Abdel Hafiz Tayel, the co-founder of the teachers’ union, insists on a broad set of labor and education reforms to undo decades of liberalization. This includes ending the use of private schooling, which he argues has led to the education gap between rich and poor in the country, forcing anyone outside the economic elite to low-wage industrial or service jobs. Vocational schools need more investment, he said, in order to train workers for more skilled, and thus higher-paid, work.

But achieving these political goals seems out of reach. With a myriad of radical and left

parties competing for power in the fall elections, the needs of labor often go ignored. In general, revolutionary groups currently engaged in dramatic standoffs with the police and military are more focused on a speedier transition to formal democracy and trials for former officials.

Kamal Abbas, the lead coordinator of the once-banned Center for Trade Union and Worker Services, which is helping to form the new independent labor federation, said workers have more pressing issues than electoral politics. Abbas said fighting the ETUF’s monopoly on organizing and forming a strong counterweight to the economic elite were of greater importance. “We don’t say we won’t work with a political party,” he said during an interview at the center’s office in south Cairo. “We can work with them, but not make them a part of our independent unions.”

That’s all well and good said Joel Beinin, a professor of Middle Eastern history at Stanford University and an expert on Egyptian labor, but there is still a gulf of opinion between the labor movement and people like Ahmed Maher of the April 6 Youth Movement, a leader of the January 25 uprising (named after the date it began) and the continuing unrest.

While on a recent trip to Egypt, Beinin explained that Maher and the April 6 Youth Movement represent an urban, educated middle class who favor a liberal, capitalist system in which they believe they can compete and thrive. What they want is a piece of the global pie that has been kept out of their reach. The *New York Times* in July, for example, highlighted how young entrepreneurs who stayed in Egypt after the uprising instead of going abroad are receiving start-up funds from the U.S. State Department and Agency for International Development.

In fact, veteran Middle East journalist Thanassis Cambanis has reported that there is already a split inside April 6, with break-away leader Tarek El-Khourly accusing Maher of courting international investors.

The labor movement, on the other hand, distrusts foreign capital and interests and seeks an economic safety net and workplace protections. Beinin says they want a system that “is going to guarantee social benefits [and] a reasonable livelihood.”

HURDLES AND ROADBLOCKS

New unions have been able to form since Mubarak’s ouster, but the Ministry of Manpower and Migration puts up bureaucratic hurdles. The ETUF also throws up roadblocks by telling employers they shouldn’t recognize new worker groups. Above all, there is nothing new in the labor code that could force bosses to raise wages, implement better safety protocols or concede more benefits. Kamal Abbas said this is part of Mubarak’s legacy: There have been instances where factory strikes have resulted in wage demands being met, but they are few and far between.

Meanwhile, a key problem standing in the way of a new workers movement is internal divisions. Hamzawy, when asked why the canal workers were not considering coordinating a general strike with other manufacturing workers, responded, “Our demands are not the same.”

If one looks only at specific grievances at individual work sites this is true, but the majority of workers face the same retrograde labor code, low wages, lack of advanced vocational schools and an education system that lags behind those in other Middle Eastern countries. Despite the stance of SCA head Fadel and the

Continued on page 12

U.S. Money Spurs Spread of HIV Criminalization Laws

By JULIE TURKEWITZ

A collection of new laws in African countries has opened the door to imprisoning people with HIV who practice safe sex, mothers who transmit the virus to their children and even those who have HIV but are undiagnosed.

In recent years laws criminalizing HIV transmission and exposure have been enacted or are pending in regions all around the world. Supporters of these laws say they are designed to address concerns about the rapid spread of the virus. But organizations ranging from Human Rights Watch to the United Nations warn that criminalizing either transmission of or exposure to the virus undermines public health efforts and endangers the lives of already vulnerable individuals.

Many public health experts are critical of these laws. “Criminalizing is not prevention,” said Federica Stines, Africa program officer at the International Women’s Health Coalition, a U.S.-based nonprofit that works with women’s health groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Stines, who has spent more than a decade promoting sexual health rights in Africa, added, “Who wants to know their status if they could be arrested?”

A decade ago, not a single African country had a law that specifically criminalized HIV exposure or transmission. Now, at least 27 African nations have legislation that punishes it.

Funding for the development of these laws can be traced to the U.S. Agency for International Development. In 2003, USAID allocated \$34.7 million to launch the Action for West Africa Region-HIV/AIDS (AWARE-HIV/AIDS), a five-year project aimed at “contributing to the control of the HIV epidemic in the West Africa region.”

USAID tasked AWARE-HIV/AIDS with reducing HIV infection and improving the health of Africans living with HIV. The program was managed, implemented and evaluated by the North Carolina-based FHI (formerly Family Health International). In 2004 FHI, whose work is heavily concentrated in West and Central Africa, convened a workshop in Chad’s capital of N’Djamena. The purpose was to adopt a legislative template that would protect Africans against HIV infection and encourage testing and education. Representatives from government AIDS bodies from 18 West African countries attended.

(According to *Forbes Magazine*, FHI is one of the 200 largest charities in the United States, with \$369 million in revenue in

2008, more than 80 percent of which came from government support. According to its website and various reports, FHI is a 40-year-old organization currently active in 60 countries, almost all underdeveloped, and has expanded from its initial focus on public healthcare to include development, education, civil society and the environment. FHI also includes a for-profit subsidiary, Novella Clinical, a “Clinical research organization focused heavily on oncology and medical devices,” with projected revenues in 2010 of more than \$100 million,



ALEX KRALES

according to the *Triangle Business Journal*.)

DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

In just three days, the Chad group convened by FHI produced a model law that African governments quickly adopted. Today, at least 14 African countries have laws based on the U.S.-funded template, according to Daniel Grace, a doctoral candidate at the University of Victoria, British Columbia who is writing his dissertation on the creation of the model law.

Grace criticized the speed with which the template was created and disseminated. “Processes of legislative consultation and the meaningful engagement with civil society and country stakeholders take time and institutional commitment,” he said. “[But] too often the important contributions of civil society, including publics infected and affected by HIV, are marginalized to tokenistic forms of participation.”

The template contains a number of ques-

tionable provisions.

First, it punishes the “willful transmission” of HIV through “any means.” This enables governments to incarcerate a person practicing safe sex, regardless of whether he or she informs a partner of his or her status. It also opens the possibility of punishing mothers who pass HIV to their children, regardless of precautions taken to stop transmission.

Second, the model law penalizes partners who do not disclose HIV status to a “spouse or regular sexual partner” within six weeks

of diagnosis. In countries where HIV-positive status can subject a person to social isolation, exile, physical abuse or death, this provision has dangerous implications.

Stines said women will be the main victims of this criminalization trend. They are more likely than men to know their HIV status; more likely to be the victims of rape; more likely to be thrown out of their homes because of their status; and less likely to be able to insist on condom use.

“These laws do nothing to protect human rights,” said René Bennett-Carlson, an attorney at the NYC-based Center for HIV Law and Policy. “They discourage HIV testing. They don’t discourage risk behaviors. They discriminate against HIV-positive persons. And they are rooted in fear.”

Many governments have adapted the model law to permit even broader abuses. Togo’s law makes any sex without a condom an illegal act, regardless of HIV status. Benin’s version makes it a crime for a person

who knows he or she is infected to engage in “unprotected sexual relations” without disclosing his or her status—no actual transmission of HIV is required. Burundi’s version says that the government can try a “willful” transmitter for murder.

Robert Clay, director of USAID’s Office of HIV/AIDS, said his agency does not support the provisions included in the law. “Criminalization of HIV/AIDS is not supported by the U.S. government,” Clay told *The Indypendent*. “We know stigmatization, stigma and discrimination, are really a driver of this epidemic,” he said. “And we need to make sure that we don’t have those types of laws on the books.”

A spokeswoman at FHI, the health group that orchestrated the N’Djamena conference, said no one at her organization could speak on the record about the group’s involvement.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

U.S. state and federal governments have, in fact, acted as pioneers in creating laws that punish HIV exposure. By 1988, at least eight U.S. states had introduced laws that specifically punished exposure. Today, 36 U.S. states have laws that criminalize HIV exposure and failure to disclose HIV status, according to the Center for HIV Law and Policy. Punishment ranges from a fine of a few thousand dollars to imprisonment for as long as 40 years.

Since 1998, the U.N. AIDS and the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights have recommended that governments not criminalize HIV transmission or exposure because these statutes nearly always open the door for human rights abuses.

Despite this, it appears that a growing number of countries believe that HIV criminalization will help them fight their continued AIDS epidemics. In 2010, Ugandan parliamentarians introduced a bill that would penalize HIV transmission. Human Rights Watch denounced the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Act, saying it will discourage testing and encourage stigma. The bill expired when the Ugandan parliamentary session ended in May 2011, but its sponsors have pledged to bring it back.

“Laws do not just happen,” said Grace. “It is important to hold actors accountable and to make visible the processes by which dangerous provisions have been passed across the [African] region.”

Julie Turkewitz writes a blog about AIDS and social justice issues for the nonprofit Housing Works at julieturkewitz.com.

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INDEBTED TO LIES

BY ARUN GUPTA

There is one simple truth about the discussion of the looming U.S. debt crisis: it is largely a compendium of half-truths, distortions, myths and outright lies.

For example, is it true that the U.S. debt unsustainable, which is spurring the budget-cutting fever? Far from it. While U.S. debt is at one of its highest levels ever in terms of gross domestic product, the interest payments in 2011 on the \$14.3 trillion public debt will be a mere \$386 billion. This is barely more than the \$364 billion paid way back in 1998. In real terms, the U.S. economy has grown nearly 30 percent since then. Rock-bottom interest rates on U.S. government debt account for the low payments today, but the practical effect is that servicing the debt as a percentage of GDP is the lowest it's been in decades.

Or what about hysterical headlines like "U.S. Debt Default Looms" (courtesy of NPR) unless Democrats and Republicans agree to raise the debt ceiling? They are completely untrue. Richard Wolff, professor of economics emeritus at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, says, if there is no agreement by Aug. 2 to allow the U.S. Treasury to borrow more funds, then "the government instead would choose among cutbacks on various expenditures such as state and local aid, medical aid, for war, for infrastructure. It would extraordinarily unusual for a government in such a situation to attack its creditors."

HAPPY CREDITORS

If no deal on the debt ceiling is reached this sucks for the rest of us, such as the millions depending on their portion of the \$23 billion in Social Security payments scheduled for Aug. 3. But the creditors will be kept happy and there will be no default because that is how government works in a capitalist economy. And even if the impasse dragged on, the feds could dip into \$550 billion in reserves, including more than \$400 billion in gold at current prices, to keep making debt payments.

One blatant lie is that Republicans and Democrats, the Congress and the White House are serious about reining in budget deficits to reduce the long-term debt. They are not. The Congressional Budget Office calculates that the deficit from 2011 to 2013 will be \$3.5 trillion. Over the next decade it will be \$8.5 trillion. Now, lots of numbers are being thrown about on spending cuts over a 10-year period, but they keep dropping — the Senate Democrats are currently proposing \$2.2 trillion in cuts and costs savings while the House Republicans weigh in at \$915 billion.

Cutting one or two hundred billion dollars a year is meaningless. Wolff says, "Even if you cut the debt \$300 billion, you are left with an enormous annual deficit that adds hugely to the national debt they all claim to care so much about. It gives lie to the idea that the Republicans and Democrats are interested in trying to cut the national debt."

Of course, the stand-off is based on another lie: that Congress and Obama administration can enforce cuts over a 10-year period. The budget process is an annual exercise. There is no provision whatsoever to make cuts permanent because they can always be undone by Congress, and taxes can always be lowered or costly new wars started, both of which always seem to happen, widening the deficit once more.

There is no end to the falsehoods and

fantasies from the chattering classes. "We are in recovery." So says Ben Bernanke — since 2009 no less. Obama has been saying

infrastructure, social welfare, stronger labor rights and aid to local governments. But this would mean redistribution of wealth down-



the same since 2010, while hedging that it is "painfully slow." Really? Tell that to the 25 million Americans who are unemployed, underemployed or have dropped out of the labor force. This amounts to an unemployment rate of 16.2 percent, but the real rate is probably closer to 20 percent after factoring in youth unable to enter the workforce or those who have taken early retirement. Try telling the 100 million Americans who are effectively caught in poverty (using far more realistic measures than the government does) or the 6.5 million households with mortgages that are delinquent or in foreclosure that we are in recovery.

The notion we are in recovery is based on believing the downturn was "the Great Recession," a distortion the *New York Times* helped spread. Paul Krugman is one of the few mainstream commentators saying that not only is there no end in sight to the four-year-long slump, let's give it a more accurate label such as, "the Lesser Depression." Suppose the corporate media had been saying "Depression" for the last few years. It would have bolstered support for extraordinary measures to dig out of an extraordinary crisis, such as policies that did work during the last depression: jobs programs, in-

wards instead of upwards. Therefore, saying recession makes it sound part of the normal boom-and-bust cycle, one we will overcome through the magic of the market as we have so many times before.

HACK THE STATE

Recovery means we can move on to reducing the debt so as get our economic house in order, a big lie told by Serious People whether pundits, politicians or experts. We are being led to think the wisest course is repeating the major mistake of the Great Depression — enforcing austerity in a deep economic funk. It's a position backed by the *New York Times*. Sure, the *Times* may sniffle that Obama's stunning offer to hack \$650 billion from Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security was "overly generous" to Republicans but that is just code for "we in the liberal penthouse support it with mild reservations." On the other side of the media aisle, the *Wall Street Journal* endorsed the Republican sadism, saying that none of the critics on the right offer "anything nearly as fiscally or politically beneficial as Mr. Boehner's plan."

This is what passes for the range of opinion in the two-most esteemed newspapers

in the country. That's because we are still in thrall of the biggest lie of all — market fundamentalism. An eternity ago, in 2009, *Newsweek* declared, "We Are All Socialists Now." They were right, but only in the way America has always been socialists: we socialize the rich when they lose money, and then we socialize their ability to profit.

Thus, the debate is about differing Democrats and Republicans visions on which parts of the welfare state should be packed off to the glue factory. "We all must sacrifice." Never mind that the effect on the national debt will be laughably small, while the suffering will be enormous. Slashing \$650 billion from entitlements — Obama's burnt offering — will nick a miniscule 3 percent off the national debt by 2020. But we must do it to appease the markets.

THE GOD OF THE MARKET

Pleasing the markets means pleasing the credit rating agencies — Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch — an example of cult-like devotion in which the elite command us to drink the Kool-Aid. Like a death watch, the media turn anxiously to the rating agencies to ask the condition of U.S. government debt. Are they going to downgrade it, which would mean higher interest rates and an even bigger debt problem? This is another lie as Japan's huge debt — more than twice the size of U.S. debt as a percentage of GDP — was downgraded in January and "there was no negative impact at all," according to one analyst.

Let's review how the big three credit rating agencies inflated the mortgage bubble. The bubble was driven by the banking industry's insatiable appetite for debt, the repackaging of dicey mortgages into profitable securities. The agencies, especially Moody's and S&P, gave investment-grade ratings to almost any sack of residential mortgage backed securities (RMBS) and collateralized debt obligations (CDO) that landed on their desks. By law, banks, pension funds, insurance companies and other institutional investors need investment-grade ratings on these securities to hold them. Since the rating agencies were paid by the issuers, they were raking in cash by gold-plating shit. Moody's revenue on these securities quadrupled from over \$61 million in 2002 to over \$260 million by 2006. For S&P, it went from \$64 million to \$265 million for CDOs in the same four years and from \$184 million in 2002 to \$561 million in 2007 for RMBSs.

Don't think they didn't know exactly what they were doing. At S&P, one manager emailed a co-worker in December 2006, "Let's hope we are all retired and wealthy before this house of cards falters." Then, according to a U.S. Senate report, the ratings firm triggered the financial collapse by downgrading huge amounts of these securities from AAA to junk. In one day, on Jan. 30, 2008, S&P downgraded an astonishing 6,300 ratings. In 18 months the two firms downgraded more securities than they had done in their entire 90-year histories. Once the securities turned to junk, the big players could no longer hold them, which burst the bubble as they were sold in a panic and losses began mounting on the bank's balance sheets.

We know the rest of the story — the financial collapse, the trillions in bailouts and credit lines, the lack of punishment for executives at any of these firms, the return to obscene profits a year later, the de-fanging

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South America's Deadly Mix of Coke and Guns

BY BENJAMIN DANGL

Cocaine, the drug fueling the trade that's left thousands dead in Mexico and Central America since 2007 and which 1.4 million Americans are addicted to, originates with two species of the coca plant grown in the South American Andes. Ninety percent of the U.S. market for cocaine is fed by Colombia, with the rest largely provided by Peru and Bolivia.

An estimated 310 to 350 tons of refined cocaine were trafficked out of Colombia last year, enough to make a rail of nose candy that would encircle the earth twice. Along with exporting cocaine northward, Colombia has become a laboratory for failed drug war policies that are finding their way to Central America and Mexico.

In July 2000 President Bill Clinton signed Plan Colombia into law, initiating the anti-drug-producing and trafficking operation that has cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$7.3 billion to date. U.S. military bases have been established in Colombia under the plan, as have extensive air patrols, pesticide spraying and surveillance. Because of the violence, some 2.5 million Colombians have been displaced.

"The lessons of Colombia are being ignored in many ways. You'll have mainstream analysts saying Colombia is the model to win the drug war. If Colombia is winning then what are the Colombians trafficking?" drug war expert Sanho Tree, a fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., told the *Independent*.

"Basically, our policy is to fracture and to break up the drug organizations, making them smaller, weaker and more manageable," Tree said. "And it's folly. Breaking up those big monopolies ... created a huge vacuum for smaller operators to fill, and we can't track smaller operations, much less disrupt them." Prior to the escalation of the U.S.-backed drug war, large traffickers, such as the Medellín Cartel led by Pablo Escobar in the 1980s, ran much of the drug trade.

Now, smaller outfits have filled that void.

Just as busting up the big "drug monopolies in Colombia ended up democratizing the drug economy," Tree explained, "if you end up weakening and fracturing the big fish in

"People in Mexico are saying we need paramilitaries to chase down drug trade leaders and this runs the risk of repeating the same nightmare as in Colombia."

The right-wing paramilitary groups in



GREEN GOLD: Coca leaves are an important cultural symbol in the Andean region, but they are also the source of the cocaine trade. PHOTO: WHERTHA/FLICKR

Mexico, then you end up with a Darwinian solution so that only best survive. This ill-conceived state power ends up thinning out the herd, with the most cunning come out on top — selectively breeding supertraffickers." The result is that billions of dollars and countless bullets are being thrown at smaller drug operations without generating long-term solutions.

The "paramilitarization" of the conflict in Mexico and Central America is also replicating Colombia's experience. Paramilitaries have been used to carry out a dirty war on behalf of the Colombian state, and the "paras," as they are known, now run much of the drug trafficking there. Tree said,

Colombia, including the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), which claimed more than 15,000 combatants a decade ago, works closely with the Colombian military and wealthy landowners by attacking guerrilla forces and dissidents. At least 1,000 soldiers and police charged with human rights abuses joined the AUC over the years, supplying the outfit with intelligence and guns. An official demobilization of paramilitaries began in 2003, but the paras and successor groups continue to operate. They are protected from extradition to the United States despite their involvement in the drug trade, and stand accused of thousands of extrajudicial assassinations. In addition to the drug trade, paras orchestrate violent land seizures against small farmers and have moved into cultivating African palm trees for biofuel production on the stolen land, colluding with high-ranking military officers and in a few instances receiving funding from the U.S. government, according to *The Nation* magazine.

UNDER COVER

"At the beginning of Plan Colombia, campesinos would plant out in the open, but those were sitting ducks, and it was easy pickings for the fumigation planes. Now it's shade grown and intercropped with other crops, and the plants are also adapting in other ways that result in better yield per kilo of leaf," Tree explained. The United States is focusing less on fumigations these days, in part because it's harder to locate these smaller hidden plots of coca.

While a handful of indigenous tribes legally produce a tiny amount of coca for government-sanctioned cultural purposes, most of the coca grown in Colombia is used to produce cocaine.

For peasants in Colombia, farming coca is generally more lucrative than growing fruits or vegetables. Part of this is due to the fact that coca and coca paste are easier to transport than other agricultural products, especially for isolated farmers far from roads.

Tree explained that many coca farmers have a small "lab" behind their house to transform the coca into coca paste. The lab consists of a wooden floor with a black plastic tarp over it, a 50-gallon drum of gasoline and ammonia. The coca is often chopped up

by a weed-wacker, and processed with the chemicals into paste, which is later turned into cocaine to be sold in the U.S. markets.

In a country of 46 million, Tree speculates, hundreds of thousands of people earn a living from coca farming and coca paste production. The people who grow coca are "the expendable ones," he said, "they are fixed targets" for eradication and anti-drug efforts, whereas the traffickers are more mobile.

"If you're a coca farmer you can be wiped out, and the traffickers can buy from another peasant." The farmers play a crucial, but risky role in the business, receiving a fraction of the money the trafficker receives. Smuggling the drugs carries its own obvious risks, but traffickers tend to get compensated in proportion to the dangers they face, since once cocaine gets across the U.S. border, its price increases dramatically.

The drug war both in the Andes and in Mexico and Central America has resulted in bloodshed, displacement of poor communities and expansion of U.S. regional power. Since 2006, Mexico's drug war has left more than 46,000 dead and displaced some 230,000.

Drug interdiction efforts in Mexico and Colombia have transformed Central America into a key hub linking South America to Mexico and the United States. According to the *L.A. Times*, in 2010 more than two-thirds of U.S.-bound cocaine shipments passed through Central America, almost tripling in four years. Traffickers are also shifting production facilities. In March of this year, a major cocaine processing lab was discovered in Honduras, whose government fell to a U.S.-backed military coup in 2009. Central America has become one of the deadliest parts of the world, with approximately 79,000 homicides connected to drug trafficking and organized crime since 2005.

CULTURE WAR

Another casualty in the war on drugs has been the criminalization of the coca leaf and its growers. As Bolivian coca grower Leonilda Zurita told me in 2006, "A grape is a grape and through a long process you make wine. It's the same with coca. Coca is coca and through a long process you can make cocaine."

Cocaine is derived from the coca leaf, but there is a big difference between the natural plant and the refined drug, which is one of the main arguments of coca farmers against the eradication of their crop. Coca leaves have been used in the Andes for millennia to relieve hunger, fatigue and sickness, to increase oxygen flow to the brain at high altitudes, and as a religious and cultural symbol.

Across Bolivia, people chew the small green leaf like tobacco and drink tea made from it. Dried leaves are sold in small bags across much of Bolivia and Peru. The U.S. Embassy in La Paz, Bolivia, which has historically been a backer of coca eradication efforts in the country, suggests chewing the leaf to alleviate altitude sickness. Besides its traditional uses, coca has been an ingredient in anesthetics, cough syrups, wines, chewing gums, and in Coca-Cola. (*The New York Times* reported on July 1, 1988, that the Illinois-based Stephan Company, Coca-Cola's supplier, was "the nation's only legal commercial importer of coca leaves, which it obtains mainly from Peru and, to a lesser extent, Bolivia." Its annual imports ranged from 56 metric tons to 588 metric tons during the '80s.)

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THE STORY BEHIND PLAN COLOMBIA

BY ARUN GUPTA

Plan Colombia is at heart a joint campaign between the Pentagon and Colombia's military. Up to 1,400 U.S. military personnel and mercenaries at a time have worked hand-in-hand with Colombia's armed forces on surveillance, spying, interdicting drug trafficking, fumigating and eradicating coca cultivation and raiding makeshift workshops that produce the cocaine.

In 2009, two RAND Corporation analysts concluded, "strategic cooperation and large amounts of U.S. aid failed to stem the production of narcotics. Nearly two-thirds of global cocaine continues to be produced in Colombia." They note the real success of Plan Colombia has been against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a guerrilla army that controlled large swaths of Colombian territory in the 1990s, shutting down much of the country's oil production.

Clinton administration officials blurred the line between the drug war and counterinsurgency. Gen. Barry McCaffrey, who oversaw U.S. forces in Latin America prior to heading the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy in the late 1990s, labeled the FARC "narco-guerrillas." Yet human rights groups and journalists have documented for years the Colombian military's alliance with paramilitary death squads that were manufacturing and transporting cocaine and heroin or were in the pay of drug cartels. U.S. officials dismiss this as isolated incidents from a distant past, but in 2010, John Quirama, a Colombian soldier in a counterinsurgency unit, provided testimony on how the military works with drug cartels by protecting smuggling routes and carrying out raids and murders at the behest of drug barons. Quirama also accused a Colombian army colonel of running his own cocaine production facility.

U.S. military aid has been used to beef up Colombia's ground forces by 60 percent and create elite counterinsurgency battalions to battle the FARC and protect oil facilities. Washington has also supplied Colombia with advanced communications equipment, naval warships and hundreds of aircraft and helicopters, which are managed by the Narcotics Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Bogota. The main result has been a weakening of the FARC, which is estimated to have 9,000 fighters, half the number it had a decade ago. Paramilitaries continue to kill peasant, indigenous and union leaders, but Colombia's oil is flowing again, with production reaching 884,000 barrels a day in March, as guerrilla attacks on pipelines have declined from 270 in 2001 to a couple dozen a year. For its part, the United States has cemented its hold on Colombia, gaining access to seven new bases in 2009 that will allow it to conduct "full-spectrum operations throughout South America," as explained in a U.S. Air Force document.

Hondurans Pay the Price for Failed War

BY RYAN DEVEREAUX

By the squeezing the illicit drug trade from below in Colombia and above in Mexico, U.S. policy has caused violence to balloon throughout Central America, destabilizing a region that has long been subject to American meddling.

During a March 30 Pentagon briefing, Gen. Douglas Fraser, commander of the U.S. Southern Command, described the “Northern Triangle” — comprised of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras — as “the deadliest zone in the world,” outside of conflicts like Afghanistan. The Northern Triangle boasts a murder rate four times that of Mexico and 10 times the United States.

As of June 2011, El Salvador had already logged 17 official massacres. In Guatemala, officials estimate that drug cartels have free rein in as much as 60 percent of the country. The mid-May discovery of 27 murdered farm laborers near Guatemala’s border with Mexico — allegedly killed by the Los Zetas cartel — prompted President Álvaro Colom to declare a state of siege in the area for the second time this year. Civil liberties were curtailed and the military was granted the right to arrest without warrant anyone it suspects of conspiring against the government. In Honduras, where armed forces have been drafted into the counter-narcotics efforts, Fraser said the murder rate is the highest in the region, at 77 deaths for every 100,000 inhabitants.

LAND, SEA AND AIR

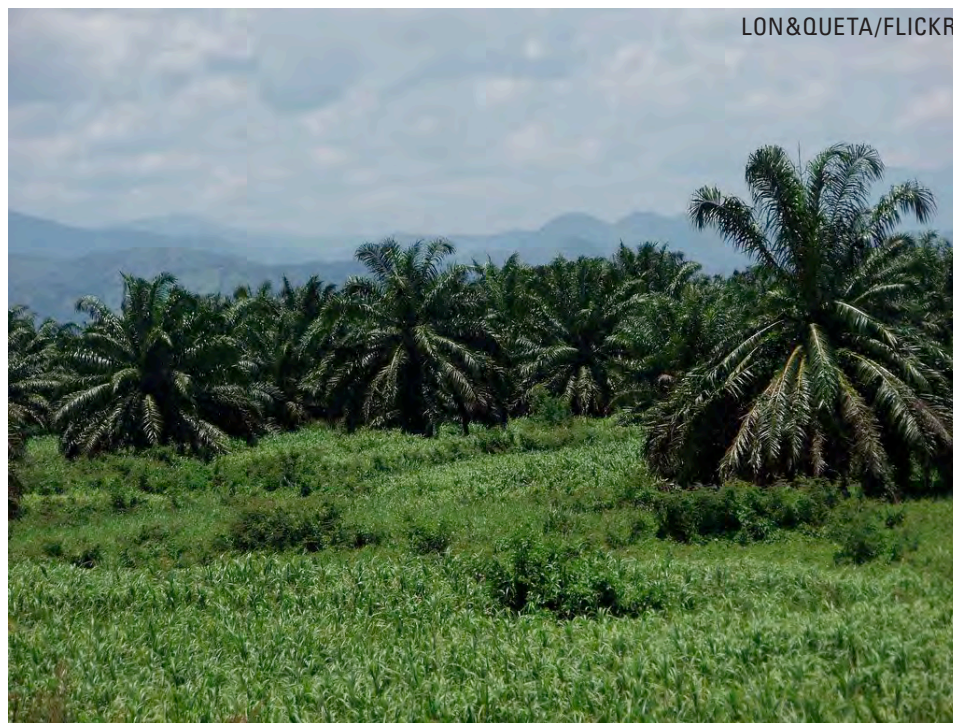
Pressure from the militarized drug wars in Mexico and Colombia has caused Mexican-based drug trafficking organizations to diversify their trade routes in part by exploiting the institutionally weak nations of Central America. They take advantage of porous borders, such as the disputed Petén region separating Guatemala and Mexico, a 600-mile-long boundary with just eight formal checkpoints. Clandestine airstrips are sprouting in remote jungles. In Honduras, the U.S. government reported that drug flights skyrocketed following the June 2009 coup that forced out President José Manuel Zelaya. In addition to land and air routes, traffickers use boats and even specially constructed submarines to move drugs from Colombia to Central America and Mexico.

According to the U.N. 2010 World Drug Report, some 200 metric tons of cocaine moves through Central America and Mexico annually, earning regional cartels at least \$6 billion each year. An estimated 84 percent of the cocaine consumed by Americans last year passed through Central America, up from 23 percent five years ago.

The recent U.S. push into Central America began in 2007 with the Merida Initiative, purportedly a program to improve law-enforcement communication, support institutional reforms and protect human rights. Critics say Merida underwrites President Felipe Calderón’s war on drugs in Mexico, which has cost the lives an estimated 46,000 people since 2006. Mexico received \$1.5 billion in U.S. funds from 2008 to 2010,

while security spending under Calderón has increased 99 percent to \$9.3 billion by 2009, according to the *Washington Post*. Around \$260 million was set aside during the same time frame for Central America — most for security services — through a separate aid

Working Hard and Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras, claims U.S. security funding is “basically neoliberal crime control that implies the criminalization of poverty, the criminalization of dissent and the militarization of police forces



UNREST IN THE FOREST: In Honduras, many small farmers have lost their land or been killed resisting the spread of African palm plantations owned by powerful forces allied with a repressive state.

package known as the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI).

For both 2011 and 2012, the Obama administration has requested an additional \$100 million for Central America under CARSI, mainly for weapons, security equipment and counter-narcotics training. But during a meeting in Guatemala City in June that brought together the seven Central American presidents as well as those from Mexico and Colombia, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said all U.S. security aid to Central America would be upped to \$300 million for 2011, a \$40 million increase over 2010. *The Economist* reported that international donors also promised lavish security packages. The Inter-American Development Bank, which already funds police training programs, prisons in Costa Rica and mobile phones for Honduran police, pledged \$500 million more over two years. To put this in context, all of Central America spent \$4 billion on security services in 2010 (which itself is a 60 percent increase in nominal dollars since 2006).

NEOLIBERAL CRIME CONTROL

Dollar amounts may illuminate the militarized U.S. counter-narcotics effort in Central America, but it does not explain why the general population lacks any semblance of security or stability. How society is affected by the drug war can be seen through the lens of Honduras, which continues to suffer the repercussions of the U.S.-supported coup in 2009.

Anthropologist Adrienne Pine, author of

throughout the region.”

The Committee of the Family Members of the Detained and Disappeared of Honduras backs up Pine’s analysis. In 2010 the human rights group recorded the assassination of 34 activists with the National Popular Resistance Front — an umbrella organization of popular opposition to the coup. It also tallied 34 peasants killed in land struggles and the slaying of 31 LGBT community members, who have been targeted by coup supporters. The committee counted an additional 326 “suspicious” killings potentially linked to Honduran state forces in 2010.

Annie Bird, co-director of Rights Action, a Washington-based organization that works with Central American human rights groups, says state-sponsored violence is “widespread,” throughout Honduras. “It’s very clear that death squads are operating in the country and that they have a certain way of killing and a way of operating and profiling victims before the killings.” According to Bird, “In the north coast it’s particularly bad ... death squads [are] overtly cooperating with the police.”

In Northern Honduras, the Aguan region has been the scene of a land rights battle, with impoverished campesinos under siege from powerful plantation owners producing African palm oil for the biofuel market. Since Zelaya’s ouster, campesino communities with legal land rights have been the target of a campaign of killings, torture and forced evictions at the hands private security forces paid by palm oil magnates and

shielded by local authorities.

According to Bird’s research, approximately 400 hired guns operate out of the Honduran military’s Rio Claro base, home to the Honduran Army’s 15th battalion. There the private militias receive training and support from U.S.-backed Honduran forces and reportedly wear police, military or security guard uniforms when carrying out assassinations, kidnappings and forced evictions.

Bird documented 21 killings in the Aguan in 2010, but says, “I’m sure that it’s much higher.” The victims are often outspoken community members defending their land rights and denouncing abuses by palm oil producers.

Campesinos are often gunned down while walking or riding a bicycle along a roadway, says Bird. They are shot at from “passing cars that belong to the palm oil planters and have palm oil security and sometimes police in them.” In other cases, individuals are snatched out of the community and tortured, their bodies eventually dumped elsewhere. Bird tells of one individual who escaped and accused palm oil guards, police and military officers of abducting and torturing him.

Reporters in Honduras are likewise in the crosshairs. The Committee to Protect Journalists has documented the killing of 12 media workers since March 2010. It issued a special report last year alleging a pattern of “botched and negligent investigative work into the killings.” In the latest incident, Nery Geremías Orellana, a correspondent with Radio Progreso and a resistance member, was shot in the head in July as he rode his motorcycle to work in the western state of Lempira. The International Federation of Journalists notes that last year over one third of all journalists killed in Latin America died in Honduras, making it one of the most dangerous places in the world to cover the news.

SPILLING SECRETS

Just weeks after the coup, the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa sent a secret cable to Hillary Clinton on July 24, 2009. Published by Wikileaks, the cable declared that in the forced removal of Zelaya, “there is no doubt that the [Honduran] military, Supreme Court and National Congress conspired on June 28 in what constituted an illegal and unconstitutional coup against the Executive Branch.” Nonetheless, the Obama administration backed the coup leaders by leaving in place almost \$200 million in aid programs (though it did suspend \$16.5 million in military aid) and by claiming that State Department lawyers could not determine if the coup met legal requirements for U.S. action, despite the unambiguous embassy cable.

The U.S. government is also well aware of the links between Honduran security forces and politicians and drug and weapons trafficking. A 2008 cable released by Wikileaks noted that U.S. supplied arms, including

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Weary of Death, Mexico Searches for Renewal

By MICHAEL McCAUGHAN

MEXICO — The scale and cost of America's failed war on drugs is painfully evident to Mexicans as the death toll since December 2006, when President Felipe Calderón sent the army into battle against drug cartels, has topped 46,000. The four main drug cartels have morphed into an ever-shifting array of allied and feuding groups now numbering 12. They have become household names — Los Zetas, La Familia and the Gulf and Sinaloa Cartels — and have extended their reach beyond Mexico's borders; they are suspected of beheading more than two dozen workers found on a ranch in northern Guatemala in May. The rising violence has created openings in the upper ranks of the cartel, and new leaders spend less on ostentatious lifestyles now and more on buying the complicity of soldiers, politicians and police. State institutions are increasingly corrupt, with perhaps 25 percent of cops on the cartel payrolls, an alarming figure given that Mexico has half a million police, the third highest in the world per capita.

The rot extends to Mexico's National Migration Institute, the body charged with aiding migrants. It has purged 550 employees, some 15 percent of its workforce, as many were facilitating the "sale" of hundreds of migrants, mainly Central Americans, to drug gangs who in turn sell women into prostitution or ransom them. Families often cough up thousands of dollars for the release of a kidnapped relative. It's a golden business opportunity, considering the estimated 500,000 people who cross the Guatemala-Mexico border each year. Migration officials have an endless supply of disposable men, women and children who cease to exist once they enter Mexico in clandestine conditions. More than 300 massacre victims have been recovered in ranches close to the U.S.-Mexico border this year.

Mexico is one the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists, with 12 deaths in the past year.

RETREAT INTO SILENCE

Statistics don't tell the full story, however. The casual brutality and the impunity enjoyed by its perpetrators have diminished trust and provoked an existential crisis. Citizens live in a state of defenselessness as violence now threatens everyone. Mexicans in affected areas retreat into silence just as Chileans did during the Pinochet dictatorship. The media have toned down coverage of drug gangs with some newspapers taking the drastic step of publicly asking cartels to advise them on what they can report, so as to prevent reprisals. Meanwhile, the Mexican army's involvement in the war has intensified the terror.

"Soldiers kick down doors, arrest anyone they feel like, wearing ski masks and carrying powerful weapons, people don't know who they are," said José Hernández, director of Independent Human Rights Commission in Morelos state. This picturesque state

just outside Mexico City was once a sleepy getaway for Mexico's wealthy. In the past year 335 bodies have been found along its highways and in towns. Not a single arrest has been made.

Everyone has a harrowing story. In April a family from Mexico City made the four-hour drive to Acapulco and went to eat at a restaurant. A bottle of whiskey suddenly appeared at their table. "That señor over there sent it," said a waiter. A few minutes later the whiskey man demanded to dance with the 15-year-old daughter. The father refused. "Listen carefully," the stranger said, "this young woman is mine." The family left, returned to their hotel, packed their bags and headed home. An hour later their car was intercepted and the daughter kidnapped at gunpoint. The young woman has not been heard of since. This was one of 70 testimonies recounted at the Zócalo in downtown Mexico on March 8 during the national march for peace with its unequivocal slogan "*Estamos hasta la madre; no más sangre*" ("We've had it up to here. No more bloodshed").

DREAMS DEFERRED

There are an estimated 10,000 "disappeared" in Mexico, taken by persons unknown, for reasons unknown, their whereabouts unknown, their relatives and friends living in perpetual anxiety, and the state is incapable of finding any of them.

In Sinaloa state some 700 people have been killed in less than six months, as violence spirals out of control and the police are accused of collaborating with the cartels. The state government's response is to ban restaurants and bars from playing *narcocorridos*, popular ballads that extol drug traffickers. I have yet to meet anyone in Mexico who believes, as the official announcement suggested, that this soundtrack to crime "promotes antisocial conduct." They merely reflect it. In Zapatista villages in the South such ballads can often be heard blasting from homes, the racy lyrics and exaggerated exploits regarded as harmless fun.

In May the governor of Sinaloa once more declared war, this time on Ralph Lauren Polo shirts, the drug traffickers' uniform of choice. The governor said he was "enormously worried" at how disaffected youth were seduced by the glamour of expensive brands, adding that he wished they would wear clothes with images of national heroes like Emiliano Zapata.

The irony of this was not lost on the Zapatista movement that sparked a renaissance of Zapata's ideals in 1994, demanding peace, justice and democracy. The government responded with tanks, warplanes and bullets. It was fine to wear a t-shirt of Zapata but the prospect of indigenous rebels implementing the dream of land and freedom was met with army and paramilitary violence. The Zapatistas challenged Mexicans to rethink society, mobilizing millions and forcing the ruling party (in power for 70 years) to open up the electoral system. However, Mexico's civil society failed to rise to the challenge of cleaning out public life

and the result has been a steady moral disintegration that has shattered faith in the country's political parties, including the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

Confidence in the country's authorities is so low and fear of reprisal so great, most families don't bother registering lost relatives as missing. This became apparent when Javier Sicilia, a poet whose son was murdered by suspected drug traffickers in March, sat down outside the offices of the state government in Cuernavaca, Morelos, for a week. An avalanche of people came forward, registering 1,200 disappeared and 3,500 deaths. Out of this sit-in came the national citizen movement for peace and for the rebuilding of the nation. Sicilia has become the spokesperson for indignant Mexico, his citizen movement for peace gathering steam and fresh ideas as it spreads around the country. Sicilia has grabbed the baton left behind by the Zapatista's *otra campana*, its effort in 2006 to unite Mexico from below, which met with little success.

'MANAGERS OF MISFORTUNE'

Sicilia has urged the government to acknowledge that the country has been devastated by a "badly planned and poorly executed" war. He has lamented the government's perverse attempt to criminalize victims of violence by insinuating they were not innocents. A similar logic allowed Argentinians to look the other way when thousands of young people were kidnapped, tortured and murdered by security forces in the 1970s. The government has become, says Sicilia, "managers of misfortune," lacking initiative and imagination.

In his landmark open letter to politicians and criminals, Sicilia linked the rise in drug trafficking to the ideology of self-interest, competition and "limitless consumerism." He has called on the political class to set aside petty differences and the pursuit of power to forge an alliance around a coherent plan of action. With elections looming next year, Sicilia urged parties to agree on a candidate of unity committed to a constitutional conference that would redraw the boundaries of political life, incorporating the recall referendum and other mechanisms of citizen power.

President Calderón is taking the opposite tack as he enters the twilight of his six-year term. He is rebranding the drug war as a patriotic crusade, deliriously likening him-



PEPE RIVERA/FLICKR
CONSCIENCE OF A NATION: Poet Javier Sicilia rallies Mexicans to create a new political life.

self to Winston Churchill leading the fight against the Nazis. There is no comparison. Calderón declared war on an invisible enemy without calculating the consequences or determining what victory might look like. Nor did he make an adequate survey of the battlefield or measure the moral and military capacity of his troops. Calderón is fully committed to a war in which the rising body count is taken as evidence of success in a macabre dance of death.

The key problem, as Sicilia noted, is that the enemy "is inside as well as outside." One of the main obstacles to securing the peace is Calderón's righthand man, Genaro García Luna, the country's supercop who runs the Ministry of Public Security. During the previous administration of Vicente Fox, García Luna created and ran the Federal Investigative Agency, which was disbanded in 2006 after being thoroughly infiltrated by the drug cartels. García Luna took up his current post in 2006 and has remained in charge despite repeated allegations of links to the Sinaloa drug cartel based on recorded telephone conversations and emails. Discontent has grown within the ranks and security officials have accused García Luna of naming corrupt police to top positions; a journalist investigating his sudden acquisition of wealth received death threats.

In June, Javier Sicilia, the moral conscience of a weary nation, led a national mobilization through 12 states. The objective was to launch a six-point Agreement for

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In the United States, since President Richard Nixon declared “war on drugs” 40 years ago, the price of cocaine and heroin has actually dropped. Despite the imprisonment of millions of drug offenders (mostly black and Latino), the escalated drug war failed to prevent the crack epidemic of the 1980s, the spread of methamphetamine, or the persistence of street-dealing drug gangs in poor neighborhoods. (It did drive up the price of marijuana, which rarely went for more than \$20 an ounce in 1971.) Yet if prohibition were ended, how could drug use and distribution be managed to ensure that the harm caused by intoxication did not exceed what’s caused by prohibition? “We believe there’ll be less drug use if they legalize drugs,” responds Jack Cole of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, a former New Jersey narcotics officer. After Portugal decriminalized possession of all drugs in 2001, he notes — it now lets adult users keep a 10-day supply — use among teenagers declined by more than 20 percent, overdose deaths dropped by half, and new HIV infections among needle users fell by more than 70 percent.

If the U.S. legalized marijuana, Cole claims, teenage use would drop because there would be age restrictions on buying it. (According to a 2010 University of Michigan survey funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), slightly more than one-fifth of high-school seniors had used pot in the previous month, while slightly less had smoked cigarettes.) As for heroin and cocaine, he says, providing a legal supply to heavy users would cut out the street drug trade. Legalization would also eliminate the violence from the drug trade, Cole argues. “The opposite of regulation is disaster,” he says. Prohibition “creates an underground market which is instantly filled with criminals.”

REGULATE The goals of legal regulation would be to manage addiction, eliminate the criminal trade, and minimize the public disorder and health risks caused by drug use, says Eric Sterling of the Criminal Justice Policy Foundation. Yet any such regime must take into account the differences among drugs and the psychology of drug users. “As the drugs become more dangerous, the regulations would be stricter,” says Cole. Marijuana, the most widely used illegal drug, would certainly be the easiest one to handle. NIDA’s 2009 survey estimated that 16.7 million Americans, 8.7 percent of the population 12 or over, had used it in the past month. It also said that 7 million people had used prescription drugs to get high, 1.6 million cocaine, 1.3 million hallucinogens



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South America

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The green leaf also sustains Bolivians on a variety of levels, from miners risking their lives in deadly tin mines to farmers in the *altiplano*, a high altitude plains region. Coca aids protesters in long, arduous marches, street mobilizations and hunger strikes. Bolivia's most powerful social movements and political parties have emerged from the farmers' fight to grow coca and resist militarization.

Much of the violence against coca and coca farmers in Bolivia ended when Evo Morales was elected president in 2006. A coca farmer or cocalero, Morales and his political party emerged from the coca union struggle against U.S.-led eradication. Under Morales, a different kind of control of coca production has taken place.

The Morales administration is continuing and expanding cooperative eradication efforts initiated in the central region of Chapare in October 2004. In established coca growing zones in Bolivia, families are allowed to grow 1,600 square meters of coca. Cooperative eradication between security forces and farmers has created a much more peaceful environment than times when violent eradication was the norm.

The 1,600-square-meter limit is based on what the government calculates to be sufficient for subsistence, for traditional use and in meeting the national legal demand for the leaf.

Despite Bolivia's efforts, cocaine production has increased according to Kathryn Ledebur, the director of the Andean Information Network, a drug policy think

tank based in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Ledebur explained that coca growers in Bolivia have adopted techniques that originated in Colombia that are "less expensive, harder to detect and a lot more efficient." The new method involves using pulverized coca leaves with a high level of cocaine alkaloid, resulting in a more lucrative operation that requires less space.

"In Bolivia what you have is kind of a splintering into micro-trafficking organizations," Ledebur said. "It doesn't matter if you squash one small group, competition is so varied, it's a great deal harder to detect." However, Ledebur said, there is a "less violent dynamic here, smaller level trafficking and no indication of the huge across-the-board corruption that has characterized Mexico, Central America and Colombia."

Nonetheless, Washington's war on drugs stretches from Ciudad Juarez in Mexico to La Paz, creating a pretext for intervention in other nations. It also provides an excuse for the suppression of indigenous and radical movements, as was the case in Bolivia.

In that impoverished Andean nation, the coca leaf is an indigenous and cultural symbol of resistance against Washington's imperialism and the violence of the war on drugs. As Leonilda Zurita told me, "This is not a war against narco-traffickers; it's a war against those who are working to survive."

Benjamin Dangl is the author of Dancing with Dynamite: Social Movements and States in Latin America, and The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia.

Mexico

Continued from page 9

"Peace and the Reconstruction of the Country," beginning in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico's drug violence capital. The pact calls for demilitarizing the conflict, rooting out corruption, emphasizing education and participatory democracy, attacking poverty and the lack of jobs and defending human rights. In addition, the document demands official recognition for the victims of violence, promoting "active memory" through public testimony and tributes in public spaces.

Sicilia met government officials in late July to begin dialogue on the peace movement's agenda before submitting practical ideas and legislative proposals to congress in September.

The first issue under debate was the call for a truth commission on behalf of victims of violence, a proposal quickly dismissed by officials; "what is needed is a revision of the investigating procedures and accountability mechanisms which are already in place" countered Rubén Fernández, deputy minister for parliamentary affairs at the Interior Ministry. This negative response to one of the least radical measures sought by Sicilia's movement is an indication that the government has little appetite for meaningful reform. As presidential elections loom in 2012, the outgoing administration appears determined to stick with the only policy it knows — bloodshed.

Michael McCaughan is a writer and researcher based in the Burren, Ireland. He is working on a biography of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Debt Crisis

Continued from page 6

of any credible reform. But now, we are being told, the rating agencies word on debt is the word of God.

This time, S&P is not so much looking for a fast buck as nakedly pushing an agenda. On July 14, S&P issued a detailed statement, explaining that it was placing both long-term and short-term U.S. debt "on CreditWatch with negative implications." It explained that "there is an increasing risk of a substantial policy stalemate enduring beyond any near-term agreement to raise the debt ceiling."

S&P did offer a safe passage. If it determined that if "an agreement would be enacted and maintained throughout the decade" to realize "budget savings of \$4 trillion," then "other things unchanged" it could affirm the stellar ratings on both short- and long-term U.S. debt. But, it warned, any "credible" agreement "would require support from leaders of both political parties."

S&P is telling Capitol Hill to drive a stake through the heart of the welfare state. To let the peasants know they must till the corporate fields until they die. Otherwise, the credit rating deities will rain downgrades upon our heads, blighting the land for future generations.

We must pay now and forever. This is the truth of the matter, a truth so crude it seems comical. Which is why we need so many lies.

Egypt

Continued from page 4

inequity between the subsidiary workers and other employees, the canal strikers insist that they are proud of the SCA and care about its economic health. They vowed to work overtime to make up for lost work once the strike ends.

This, however, is far different from the attitude one finds in the Qualified Industrial Zones of Sadat City. Workers there spoke about how demoralizing their situations were, especially when their companies' foreign owners employed supervisors doing the same work as those on the shop floor, but at three times the pay.

There is economic hope for Egypt. On June 25 the interim government rejected \$3 billion in IMF loans in the face of strong public opposition. Samer Shehata, an assistant professor of Arab politics at Georgetown University, recently told National Public Radio that the neoliberal policies that accompanied past loans "simultaneously produced high inflation and declining real wages and increasing levels of poverty and income inequality, according to the World Bank and IMF's own statistics." This represents a break with Mubarak's Egypt, but fundamentally restructuring the economy will only happen if the working class has a direct voice in shaping the new government and can build its own power against employers.

Ari Paul has reported for The Nation, The American Prospect, Al Jazeera English and Free Speech Radio News.

Honduras

Continued from page 8

anti-tank weapons, "lost" by the Honduran military were eventually recovered in Mexico City, Ciudad, Juarez, and Colombia. In April, McClatchy News cited a former member of the Honduras Council Against Drug Trafficking who estimated as much as 10 percent of the Honduran Congress is linked to drug traffickers. And in mid-July, the president of the Honduran Congress, Marvin Ponce, said Honduran police chiefs had confided that up to 40 percent of the nation's police forces are involved in organized crime.

In spite of these concerns, the United States continues to push a military agenda in Honduras. John Lindsay-Poland, Research and Advocacy Director at the Fellowship of Reconciliation, argues that the U.S. reliance on military power is a reflection of its shrinking economic power. "In the [Latin American] region as a whole, the United States doesn't have as much economic influence as it did, because China is a major actor. The United States economically itself is weaker. Venezuela is a factor economically. And so, lacking the economic influence, the United States exerts its influence militarily."

Annie Bird adds that in the case of Mexico, "a military, police response to the drug trafficking problem is not producing results and the only thing that it's producing is massive killing ... All it's done has escalated violence and killed Mexicans, so that's all that we can expect in Central America."

Ryan Devereaux is a Brooklyn-based independent journalist and News Production Fellow at Democracy Now!



'ILLEGAL': The U.S. embassy in Honduras quickly determined there was no justification for the military coup in 2009. But the Obama administration has provided aid and diplomatic support to the regime for the last two years.

Legalization

Continued from page 11

IF YOU WANNA GET DOWN

Cocaine poses the most complex issues. Occasional users can do it relatively safely, but hardcore users often tend toward extreme binges rather than regular-dose addiction. That would make maintenance impractical.

“There is no treatment for crack/cocaine,” says Rivera. “In fact, there is no maintenance other than meds (licit and illicit), acupuncture, or some form of stress reduction to counter the dysphoria associated with over-depletion of dopamine receptors.”

But, she adds, “Dysfunctional crack and cocaine use dramatically declined from the ’90s without treatment.”

The British group Transform UK, in its 2009 study “After the War on Drugs: Blueprint for Regulation,” suggests trying to move the cocaine market to milder forms such as coca energy drinks and tea.

That’s not necessarily wishful thinking. A general principle of prohibition is that it makes the most potent forms of a drug the most value-for-weight profitable for dealers. For users, that makes it more cost-effective to shoot heroin instead of smoking opium, to smoke crack instead of chewing coca leaves, and to drink whiskey instead of beer.

Others are more skeptical. “Can people be satisfied with less of a rush?”

asks Sterling. “I don’t think so.”

CRIME PAYS

Any country that legalized drugs would run afoul of a network of international treaties. The 1961 Single Convention requires prohibition, and a followup, the 1988 Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, requires signatories to ban possession.

The loopholes available in this framework are limited. The Dutch coffeeshops are “not legal, but tolerated,” St. Pierre points out. They can sell cannabis openly, but they still have to buy it from illegal growers or smugglers. (The far-right Dutch government is trying to limit coffeeshops to residents only; Amsterdam’s mayor opposes that proposal.) Ending prohibition would also mean downsizing its enforcement apparatus. Federal, state, and local governments spend somewhere between \$40 billion and \$70 billion a year to interdict drugs and arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate offenders. That money funds both police departments and the economies of rural towns where prisons are the biggest employers.

“I’m of the opinion that moving out of drug prohibition is less about drugs and the ideal regulatory apparatus than it is about what to do with the lucrative economy of

prohibition — is dismantling it even an option?” says Joyce Rivera. “Discussions around models of regulation avoid the core question of, in whose interest? If you can punish the poor [user] for the pain of the middle class, then why would you change a system that is working pretty well for the profiteers?”

The other side of that coin is the illegal drug trade. Statistics about it are speculative and often inflated — estimates of annual U.S. marijuana sales range from \$10.5 billion to more than \$110 billion — but it certainly pumps up the economy in several parts of the country, from the ghetto crack and heroin markets of Baltimore to the marijuana-growing areas of the Emerald Triangle and Appalachia.

Clifford Thornton of Efficacy, a Connecticut-based drug-policy group, supports ending prohibition, but says it would do more harm than good without a “Marshall Plan” to employ the people who now work in the drug trade.

“How are we going to replace the illegal market created by Prohibition?” he asks. “We’re probably talking about hundreds of thousands of people.”

This could conceivably be funded by taxes combined with the savings on law enforcement. California NORML estimates that a

\$2-a-gram tax on marijuana would bring in \$6 billion to \$13 billion a year nationally.

Any legalization system must also balance harm reduction and regulation with the nature of drug use. Heavy drug use often comes from a place more dionysiac than responsible — at best, a desire for sensory and emotional extremes; at worst, self-destructive patterns.

Eric Sterling suggests that psychedelic drugs, for example, could be handled like wilderness canoe trips or skydiving — permitted with a trained, licensed, insured guide. Many people seek danger and adventure, he says, but “you can’t make it foolproof.”

Policy elements that reduce harm, says Rivera, would include “educate, educate, educate, as in ‘drug, set, and setting’; develop, regulate, and enforce quality standards; and tax foreign and domestic production, sale, and consumption.”

Legalization would be a major social experiment, says Sterling, so it would have to allow for testing different approaches.

“I am certain that I don’t know what model will work,” he says. “I don’t have the answer and I don’t know anybody who does. It would be nice if all of these were neat soluble packages. Unfortunately, they’re not.”



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The Invention of Debt

By IRINA IVANOVA

Pundits like to point to an overreliance on debt as a distinguishing feature of our modern age. Right before the crash of 2008, U.S. consumer debt equaled the country's GDP, repeating the pattern of 1929. In 2010, Americans' total credit card debt was surpassed for the first time by the debt held in student loans. This year, the total value of those loans will pass \$1 trillion.

Anthropologist David Graeber's *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* is timely, but it would have been just as prescient during the colonization of the Americas or Ancient Rome. As Graeber masterfully demonstrates, debt has played an integral role in human relationships since time immemorial. Debates over debt forgiveness have defined societies, and the repercussions of those choices are visible today in our language, conventions and laws.

Graeber, a professor at Goldsmiths, University of London, has a reputation as a scholar with great resonance outside the academic realm. As such, *Debt* is a refreshing, revealing and often witty look at economics that places the "dismal science" firmly back in the context of human history. Graeber sat down with *The Independent* to discuss his new book and shed some light on our troubles with money and the latest global upheavals.

IRINA IVANOVA: *What's wrong with the traditional economic picture?*

DAVID GRAEBER: We're all brought up with this story: once upon a time there was barter, and that was inconvenient, so people had to invent coins, and then credit systems — this leads us to Wall Street and complex financial instruments. But this is backwards. Actually, credit systems came first. Coinage was invented thousands of years later. And barter really only occurs when [a society] used to have money and it goes away for some reason — Argentina, Russia, someplace like that.

II: *So, though we talk about debt in moral terms, why is there such reluctance to apply this morality to institutions?*

DG: History has pivoted back and forth between periods dominated by virtual money — credit — and periods dominated by actual physical money, gold, silver or bronze coins. When money is assumed to be a social relationship or credit arrangement, it's much harder to

treat debt as a sacred principle, because money is a promise, and promises can be renegotiated. During these broad periods of history where most money is paper or promises, or sticks, or clay, there's always social control to prevent credit crises from getting out of hand.

What we saw in the current credit crisis is partly the effect of this hyper-charged neoliberalism, where people were told, everybody has to think of themselves as a corporation; everything is capital, everything is an investment. In fact, financial corporations got to do things that even other corporations didn't get to do, like make up money. I strongly suspect that if you look at why people were taking all these crazy mortgage loans they couldn't possibly repay, on some level the logic was, okay, well if we're all going to be little corporations, I'll make up money, too.

II: *The media has framed the recent debt crises as unprecedented — but you show that financial crises have existed for as long as we can remember.*

DG: In ancient Mesopotamia, where they first invented interest-bearing loans, they would lead quite regularly — every generation — to extreme crises, where farmers grew increasingly indebted, to protests ... Society would start to break down. And the reaction of governments was always debt cancellation.

In periods where gold and silver are the dominant form of money, which tend to be periods of great empires and slavery — they don't forgive debts. In fact, debts become one of the major ways of turning most people into slaves.

II: *You draw a connection between cash and violence.*

DG: The first objects of exchange were people. It had been assumed that people were absolutely unequivalent to anything else. If you marry my sister, you owe me a sister at some point, or if they have kids, one goes back to my clan — these sorts of arrangements. But the idea that my sister would be equivalent to 27 gold bars is completely outrageous. You only make that leap when you have systems of slavery, which come from war. A great finding of the book is just how many of our economic, legal and political institutions go back to ancient warfare, and by extension, slavery.

Our law of property goes back to Roman law, and it's unlike any other legal system in the world,

because it assumes property is a relation between you and a thing in which you have total power over that thing. This idea only crops up at exactly the time that Romans conquered the Mediterranean and thousands of slaves came pouring in. And slavery is a relationship of absolute power between two people that, therefore, turns one of those people into a thing. In fact, that's how slaves are defined — talking things.

doesn't actually do anything. It's not clear why they call it the federal reserve, because they don't have to have reserves. They can just make up money. And they do! That's quantitative easing. The gold is a purely symbolic token at this point.

The forms of capitalist money — the kind that capitalists use with each other — have tended to be government war debt. Cash markets themselves have arisen, more

runs true, is those empires are going to break down. Once we go back to an understanding that money is just a social arrangement — it's just a promise, an IOU — there's no intrinsic moral difference between that type of promise and any other promise people make. That's exactly what people who are demonstrating in Greece and Spain are talking about.

We learned in 2008 that debts could be made to vanish if really important people want them to. Once you know that, they can't play the same games they've always been playing. But at the very dawn of this new age of virtual money, the first thing they tried to do is create this giant global bureaucracy — the IMF, the World Bank, and so forth — which were essentially built to protect creditors from ever having to face default from any debtor. There was a huge global movement that completely rejected that logic, and that's the movement that has now reappeared in Europe.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's big reaction to the threat of the Arab Spring, other than beefing up security and raising salaries? Debt cancellation. Just like in ancient Mesopotamia.

That intimate relation between empire and financial structures and capitalism is still with us. What will it take to make this imperial structure dissolve? Is it in the nature of capitalism that it can only work in a situation of large empires? Most of the defining features of capitalism strike me as things that won't last too long in this age of virtual money. The idea of perpetual growth — that's obviously hitting its ecological limits anyway, but it's very much tied to an assumption that all money makes money.

Most people for much of world history, if they came to see America today, they would assume that most people here are slaves. Aristotle would not seem to think there was much of a distinction between selling yourself as a slave and renting yourself, and if you look at the history of wage labor it tends to emerge as slave rentals. While we've gotten rid of formal slavery, we kept the logic of slavery in our laws and our ideas of freedom. If we get rid of that, institutions like wage labor, which define what we find objectionable in capitalism, won't really last, and there's every reason to believe we'll move on to something else.

For the full interview, visit independent.org.



That logic still remains within our conception of freedom. Gradually freedom went from being part of a community to the ability to do absolutely anything. So it becomes modeled, because the slave owner can do anything he wants to the slave, and by extension, to the rest of his property.

II: *So what would happen if all the world's gold reserves evaporated?*

DG: It would make no difference. The gold that's underneath the Federal Reserve in New York

than anything else, as a side effect of military operations. Coins originally were minted to pay soldiers, mercenaries, standing armies. That's why when large standing armies disappeared in the early to middle ages, so did coins.

II: *How do you reconcile the fact we're an empire whose money is entirely virtual — a situation that never appears in your book?*

DG: Yes, there's a problem, isn't there?

My own prediction, if history

Labor Wars

The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers' Movement or Death Throes of the Old

BY STEVE EARLY
HAYMARKET BOOKS, 2011

BY BENNETT BAUMER

After labor's public sector defeat in Wisconsin, unionists and their allies licked their wounds and wondered, what next? Tens of thousands of teachers, municipal workers and their allies took dramatic action against the right-wing governor hell-bent on destroying union membership. What separated Wisconsin from typical union protests was that workers operated under the auspices of official unionism but also as independent agents in a social fight that was bigger than collective bargaining — it was a fight between the billionaire's puppet governor and the people.

In his new book, *The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers' Movement or Death Throes of the Old*, Steve Early, a former labor organizer and attorney discusses the history and future of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) — and his critique is often searing.

Over the past decade, the SEIU has broken ties with the AFL-CIO and cofounded a rival labor federation, Change to Win, and sought to consolidate its smaller local unions into large multi-state mega-locals to better organize wealthy corporations. Former SEIU president Andrew Stern put these mergers into motion by pressing local leadership into voluntarily joining mega-locals or by placing reticent locals into trusteeships and appointing trusted lieutenants to run them.

Early turns every rock over and often finds mud. In SEIU's Nevada Local 1107, a common story line in *Civil Wars* occurs: depending which side you're on, Stern backed reformers — or usurpers — and fought local leadership to make 1107 a more effective organizing machine — or to strip members of their rights. The Stern-backed organizer, "Hurricane" Jane McAlevey squared off against 1107 president Vicky Hedderman in a tainted election where the Department of Labor found that McAlevey's slate illegally used union resources to campaign. What followed were decertification elections and lost members to SEIU's rival California Nurses Association, and the end of McAlevey and Hedderman's SEIU careers (McAlevey currently writes for *The Nation*).

Civil Wars also weighs in on the SEIU's use of a 1-800 hotline to substitute for a work-site based grievance system (shop stewards),

Continued on page 16

China's Got Class

"The Making of the Chinese New Working Class"

LUDLOW 38
38 LUDLOW ST.
THROUGH SEPT. 4

BY MIKE NEWTON

Perhaps you've heard of this new, post-industrial economy we're supposedly living in? It's an appealing concept — a world based on ideas rather than things — but it doesn't sync up with a rather shocking reality: the global, industrial working class is bigger now than it's ever been. The exhibit "The Mak-

and a free, multilingual mini-textbook available on ludlow38.org. The exhibit melds social-issue documentary, natural-history-style categorical display and postmodern art ideology — a triad of elements that fit together like old friends, but which can be surprisingly hard to come by. The curators have heroically stuffed a museum lobby's worth of material into Ludlow 38's unassuming storefront space (as you look around, see if you can avoid banging into the glass display cases — I couldn't). There are poignant photographs of families living together in cramped rooms — the flotsam of global pop/con-

the wall, colorful packets of food on the table. But, there's also yet another reality to be reckoned with, here: this little room, with no running water, is meant as home for around four people. The curators have successfully built a room that's both somewhere and everywhere: a placid home uprooted into a gallery space, becoming a sort of ground zero — one epicenter among many — in the dizzyingly expansive landscape of global poverty. Perhaps most importantly, you can feel this space in your body. In a world of information, there's information that can only be experienced in the flesh; you walk



NEW WORKING CLASS: An installation view of "The Making of the Chinese New Working Class," currently on display at Ludlow 38 through September 4.

ing of the Chinese New Working Class," currently at Ludlow 38, details the increasing amount of industrial workers in China. For example, one statistic highlighted in the exhibit: By the end of 2008, China was home to over 225 million migrant workers — that's more than populations of France, Italy and Germany, combined.

The exhibit, which features dry, stat-heavy wall text and big, printed charts, includes many numbers like this — perhaps too many. The show was created by the Culture and Art Museum of Migrant Workers, a worker-founded NGO located in a small village outside Beijing, along with curators-in-residence at MINI/Goethe-Institut in New York. The exhibition also includes public projects (now past) conceived with artist Marty Kirchner and The Public School New York,

sumer culture (is that bed made out of *Toy Story* toy boxes?) sometimes peeking up amidst the sort of hardscrabble living quarters which, you imagine, laborers have been coming home to for centuries. In those rickety glass cases, you'll see prosaic artifacts of working life — such as shop-worn tools, pamphlets and newspapers. Perhaps most frustrating: a case full of identity documents—passports and paperwork, the yellowing end-products of what seems an endless litany of bureaucratic hassle, all for the odd privilege of being able to work somewhere you're not from.

The show's *pièce de résistance* is a full-scale recreation of a migrant worker's house. The room is not unpleasant; there's a little gas stove, a soft bed, a small TV with a DVD player, a dusty computer, squash rackets hanging on

away from this show with a felt, bodily knowledge of the lives of those who make our toys and computers, of a reality so tightly connected to — and yet so distant from — daily life in America.

Or is it? Ludlow 38 is located in lower Manhattan, on the edges of Chinatown — a place where it's not uncommon for Chinese immigrants to live in close quarters while working low-paying jobs, navigating the high Manhattan rents by cramming multiple families into tiny apartments. It seems a bit strange to mount an educational exhibition on the lives of migrant Chinese workers in a place where many migrant Chinese workers live their lives. But, maybe that's the point — solidarity and communion, the sharing of space and ideas across large distances. Not a lecture and not a lesson, just life.

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SCREENING: *WHISTLIN' DIXIE*. Documentary filmmaker Meredith Heil invites you to travel along as she explores America's Southern heartland in search of queer music. The screening will be accompanied by an acoustic performance by queer NYC musicians.

THURS, AUGUST 11, 7PM • \$5 SUGG

READING: SILVIA GIAGONI'S *FIELDS OF RESISTANCE*. Migrant farmworkers in the United States generally live and work in unsafe conditions. Please join Giagoni for a reading from her recent book and learn this remarkable story.

WED, AUGUST 17, 7PM • \$5 SUGG

PRESENTATION: URI GORDON'S *ANARCHIST POLITICS IN THE AGE OF COLLAPSE*. Gordon examines some of the questions around the prospect of industrial collapse over the coming generations, and begins a discussion around the consequences for anarchists and their allies today.



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BOOKS

Make the Road



LEO GARCIA

*Oppose and Propose:
Lessons from Movement for a New Society*
By ANDREW CORNELL
AK PRESS, 2011

BY MATT WASSERMAN

For those on the post-Seattle left, consensus decision-making, spokescouncils and direct action have become de rigueur. Under banners such as “we make the road by walking,” much of the U.S. left focuses at least as much on process as on changing the world. While this model of prefigurative politics harkens back to the old slogan of “building the new world in the shell of the old,” its current organizational form would be unrecognizable to anarchists from a hundred years ago.

In *Oppose and Propose*, activist-academic Andrew Cornell traces the history of the contemporary (re-) adoption of prefigurative politics through a study of Movement for a New Society (MNS). A nationwide organization committed to the principles of nonviolence, MNS contributed to numerous social movements during the '70s and '80s (including efforts against the Vietnam War and the expansion of the nuclear industry), while also spending much of its energy building co-operative businesses, communal housing and other counter-institutions. Despite the tension between those focused on lifestyle politics and those inclined to storm the barricades, (some) members of MNS saw these institutions as not simply alternative models of living or working, but also as bases for further activity.

Although it never gained critical mass or managed to become a multi-racial organization, MNS left in its wake a slew of cooperative enterprises and communal houses in West Philadelphia, where the organization

was based. However, its most notable legacy is probably the introduction of consensus, spokescouncils and other forms of anti-authoritarian organizing into the U.S. left.

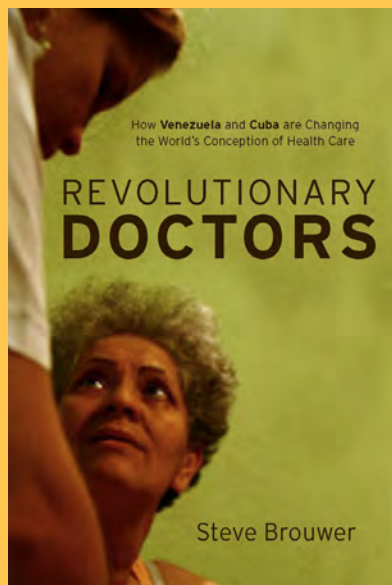
Oppose and Propose starts with a brief history of MNS and proceeds to an extended discussion with organization veterans. Throughout, there is an emphasis on critically analyzing MNS' legacy, as well as drawing lessons from this history for contemporary social movements. By historicizing particular models of decision-making and organizing, Cornell opens up space for discussion of their advantages and disadvantages. To take one example, while consensus is often fetishized as the most democratic way of decision-making, it can be anti-democratic and counterproductive when a single individual can block an organization from moving forward.

The text of *Oppose and Propose* itself embodies an alternative model of scholarship, or “militant co-research.” Not only is *Oppose and Propose* designed to be useful to social movements, it is also written in collaboration with former members of MNS rather than simply about them. In Cornell's discussion with MNS members, they even respond to and critique the short history of the organization that forms the first part of the book.

The term praxis refers to an organic link between theory and practice, where theoretical reflection leads to action, which serves as fodder for further reflection, which then informs additional action, and so on. In *Oppose and Propose*, Cornell puts praxis into practice, offering insights of relevance to those interested in changing the world and not merely interpreting it. Pocket-sized and beautifully illustrated, *Oppose and Propose* is worthwhile reading for all those interested in organizing for a better world.

“The Cuban medical education model, so eloquently described in this book, has not merely transformed health care in much of Central and South America. It has shown doctors and medical students who work in the unjust and dysfunctional U.S. health care system that another world is possible.”

—Steffie Woolhandler, MD, MPH;
professor of public health, CUNY; visiting professor of medicine, Harvard Medical School



REVOLUTIONARY DOCTORS

*How Venezuela & Cuba
are Changing the
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Labor

Continued from p. 15

as well as the continuing California health-care civil war with United Healthcare Workers West — the “mother of all trusteeships” as Early termed it.

Early's *Civil Wars* pulls back the purple curtain and reveals an autocratic wizard (Stern) pulling the levers and wreaking havoc. It should be said, and Early agrees, that the SEIU is a vital institution that has lifted millions of low-wage largely Black and

Latino service workers out of abject poverty through the benefits of union membership, while also advocating for better healthcare practices like patient to staff ratios. The union has a clear plan to organize the unorganized where most other unions are content to coast on a dwindling supply of dues money. The SEIU is also not as monolithic as Early thinks, and as any large organization goes, has factions both left and right. Early advocates for what writer Robert Fitch calls “union democracy”: the conflict between bottom-up member democracy and top-down bureaucracy.

Cairo Yarn



Scheherazade, Tell Me a Story
DIRECTED BY YOUSRY NASRALLAH
DISTRIBUTED BY ARTMATTAN PRODUCTIONS

BY KENNETH CRAB

The title of *Scheherazade, Tell Me a Story* sets up a bold and fanciful frame of reference by relating its protagonist, Hebba (Mona Zakki), the irreverent host of a popular TV talk show renowned for tackling touchy political subjects, to the fabled storyteller of *One Thousand and One Nights*.

Scheherezade was wedded to a king who married a new virgin bride each day and had her killed the following dawn in retaliation for his first wife's infidelity. Scheherezade told the king a new story each night. When dawn came, she left the tale hanging, and the captivated monarch allowed her to live until the next evening when she could relate the ending. This strategy of deferred gratification saved her life and her marriage.

Established screenwriter Wahid Hamed and director Yousry Nasrallah tap into the feminist implications of the legend to indict contemporary Egypt's institu-

tionalized misogyny, but their film feels and falls so flat it makes one wish they could have taken a few master classes in narrative expression with *Scheherazade*.

The premise is workable enough, if somewhat overwrought. Seven months into Hebba's marriage to Karim (Hassan El Raddad), the deputy editor-in-chief of a government-owned newspaper, he is unofficially told that he will be promoted if he can get his wife to soften the socially critical tone of her show.

Reluctantly, Hebba agrees to "stick to things the government can't be blamed for," and she invites women to share some of their extraordinary personal experiences in front of the camera. The film is structured around three of these testimonies, which are rendered in straightforward flashbacks. Of course they contain revelations of prejudice, injustice and abuse that spill over in unacceptable political resonance and build up to the point when Hebba's own cathartic suffering—the scene where Karim beats her bloody—is distastefully presented as a rite of passage—makes her part of the sisterhood. Host and guest, she gains access to the nirvana of reality TV; all *Scheherazade* ended up finding

was love.

Notwithstanding their agenda, the filmmakers fail to create any genuine scenes of female bonding, most notably in the second flashback testimony, where they trace three sisters hysterically vying for the affections of a young hunk to its criminal climax over an account of the eldest sister's fascinating cohabitation with the woman who used to be her guard in prison. The multiplicity of tales fosters superficiality of characterization rather than narrative complexity. The leads muster no credibility as journalists, all men are depicted as boorish and lecherous types instead of people, and the symbolism proves so heavy-handed it occasionally borders on the grotesque. (The opening credit sequence is visualized as a slow-motion Food Network commercial, with extreme close-ups of steely forks poking at moist, verdant produce.) Every now and then hints of melodrama in the style of the early works of Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar peek through, but those remain far too tentative and clumsy to lift *Scheherazade's* patchy exposé anywhere near the discursive level of its illustrious namesake.

Reading Fitch's union democracy essays in past issues of New Politics, I was struck by his metaphor that unions are "black boxes whose institutional contents—the relations between members and leaders and its legal infrastructure—can be ignored in explaining their behavior." Fitch's union critique burns even deeper than Early's, and Fitch asks if the reason why Madison-type protests are so rare is less a product of declining union rolls and internal democ-

racy but more a product of unions themselves.

"American unions, going back to the creation of the AFL, have been predominantly local rent-seeking institutions. So the problem of union governance was basically a question of which groups would get to share in the rent. This economic goal dictated a politics of closure rather than a politics of mass mobilization."

For Early, the SEIU's mergers squelch a member's voice, but for

Fitch they represent a streamlining of union resources in order to more effectively compete with other unions to procure "rent" and thus conflict or civil war occur. I am with Early in the short-term for next steps: union members need to push leadership or run for union office, but Fitch's black box will need to be opened for answers to the long-term.

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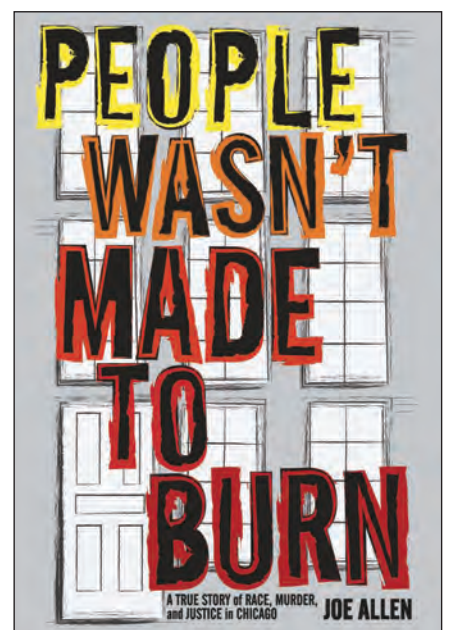
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Hollywood's Hard-on for War

Transformers: Dark of the Moon
DIRECTED BY MICHAEL BAY
DISTRIBUTED BY PARAMOUNT PICTURES

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

Director Michael Bay films a woman prancing up the stairs and cooing to a guy in bed, "My hero needs to wake up." The next two and half hours of screen time, cars and jets transform into robots and blast Chicago into a shooting gallery. Welcome to *Transformers 3: Dark of the Moon* — a dumb, loud movie which would be forgivable if it was only stupid.

A closer look reveals the film is a sexist, racist, nationalist Pentagon commercial that feeds off of male anxiety. It promotes vitality through war and reaffirms white supremacy. It uses women as tokens of male potency. It universalizes American foreign policy. And it just plain sucks. But is the film's over-the-top military masculinity related to the impotency of its male audience? Is *Transformers 3* a form of Hollywood Viagra?

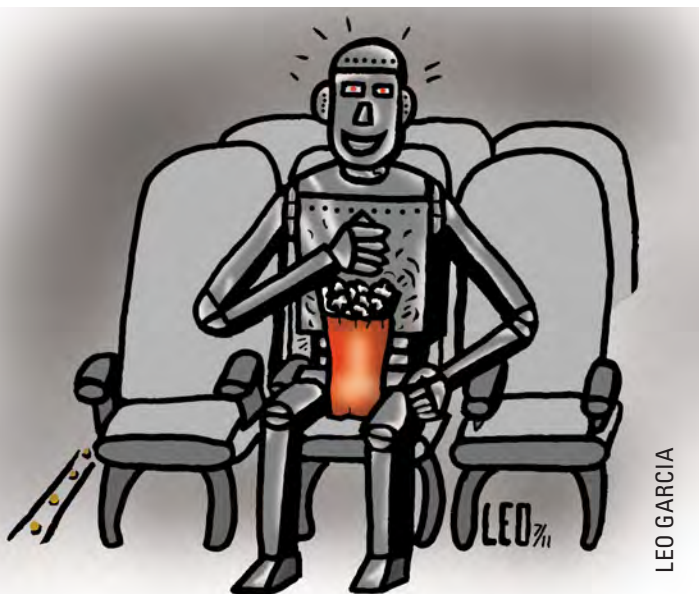
The first goal of a narrative is to have the audience identify with the protagonist. When we first see Sam Witwicky played by Shia LeBeouf, he is out of work, a recent college graduate who is given lunch money by his girlfriend. He goes on job interviews and is repeatedly denied. The character mirrors a larger national anxiety. According to a June *New York Times*/CBS poll done in June, four in ten Americans think the United States is in a permanent economic decline.

Young men in the theaters see themselves reflected in Witwicky, the fidgety, motor-mouthed, underemployed underdog.

And when he does land a job, he drives a creaky jalopy to his girlfriend's office where her oily boss Dylan Gould gives them a tour of his antique cars. The boss, played by a smug Patrick Dempsey, tells him it was his phone call that got Witwicky the job. It is a telling moment of class tension that reflects the increasing power the wealthy have over us.

Witwicky is attacked by a vulture-like Decepticon and sure enough, he learns that evil robots are planning to again seize the planet and enslave humanity. He transforms from mundane paper-pusher to global savior and rejoins his Autobot allies. His male anxiety of being impotent is released into a cathartic fight against the enemy. Running to war he tells his girlfriend, "I just want to matter."

The troubling thing is how that enemy is imagined. When you look closely the Autobots aren't aliens, they're Americans. They act out American foreign policy by blasting a secret Middle Eastern nuclear plant, which obviously stands in for Iran. Decepticons aren't aliens, they're Arab, African or wild animals. We first see Megatron, the Decepticon master-villain, as a refugee-terrorist in the North African desert with, hold



LEO GARCIA

played by English model Rosie Huntington-Whitely. She's not just white, she's Anglo-Saxon white, blazingly white, original white. She is so white that after running through a giant alien robot war that turned downtown Chicago into grimy rubble; her face and her clothes are still white.

Her beauty is often studied in slow motion as are the Transformer acts of violence. Slow motion is cinema's money-shot because it is when the narrative tension between characters is released in sexual display or graphic brutality.

As the movie plods on the major villains are killed by the Autobot leader Optimus Prime in gruesome scenes of robot decapitation. At the end Witwicky also gets his hands dirty by killing the rival for his girlfriend, the oily, double-crossing Gould. In Bay's world, war answers everything. It's as if the film was directed by German proto-Nazi Ernst Junger.

Hollywood teaches male audiences that war cures anxiety and the enemy is not only wrong but often is not even human. With every Hollywood movie that glorifies war and military hardware, our nation is nudged a degree closer to fascism. *Transformers 3: Dark of the Moon* has aroused millions of movie goers with the spectacle of violent death, each killing of the "ethnic other" is a visual pill that like Viagra helps the citizens of a declining empire to "get it up."

FRIDAY 8/12
OPENING NIGHT FILM & RECEPTION
NY THEATRICAL RELEASE

7:30 PM **SCHEHERAZADE, TELL ME A STORY**
RECEPTION: 6:30PM



A surprising, engrossing and thoughtful film about modern gender politics in Egypt, *Scheherazade, Tell Me a Story*, is a sharp observation of Egyptian society, using the classic Arabian Nights framework of a story within a story.

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-Deborah Young, Hollywood Reporter

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SONS OF BENKOS

An entertaining documentary that explores the African culture of Colombia through music. The film presents the music of the "sons of Benkos," the descendants of Benkos, one of the most important Black leaders in the fight for freedom during the time of slavery in Colombia.



Directed by Silva Lucas, 2003, Colombia/France. In Spanish with English subtitles

FOLLOWED BY

SUSANA BACA: MEMORIA VIVA

Susana Baca is not only a champion in the performance and preservation of Afro-Peruvian heritage, but also an elegant singer whose shimmering voice sings of love, loss and life.

Directed by Mark Dixon, Peru/Belgium, 2003, Spanish with English subtitles.



SATURDAY 8/13 (CONT.)

6 PM: FIRE IN BABYLON

The breathtaking story of how the West Indies triumphed over its colonial masters through the achievements of one of the most gifted teams in sporting history - the West Indian cricketers. This is their story, told in their own words.

"Riveting." - Marc Lee, Daily Telegraph

SATURDAY 8/20

3:30 PM: DAVID IS DYING

NY PREMIERE



A multidimensional story of a man torn between love and sex in contemporary London, *David is Dying* is a complex drama by one of the new talented voices of Black British Cinema.

Directed by Stephen Lloyd Jackson, 2011, UK

5:30 PM: DIRECTORS ON DIRECTING

A look at the development of filmmaking and its contribution to the social and political times form the perspective of Black filmmakers, featuring candid interviews with Lawrence Hilton Jacobs, Robert Townsend, Bill Duke, Fred Williamson, Melvin Van Peebles and other industry leaders.

Post Screening talk back with Woody King and Carol Bash.

Directed by Jamel Wade, 2009, USA



SUNDAY 8/21

1 PM: SCHEHERAZADE

3:45 PM: BOUNCING CATS

Screening followed by Breakdance & Hip-hop Performance choreographed by Rhapsody James and Reception.

The inspiring story of one man's attempt to create a better life for the children of Uganda using the unlikely tool of hip-hop with a focus on b-boy culture and breakdance. This multiple award winning film features narration by Common and interviews with Mos Def, Will.I.Am, and K'Naan.

Directed by Nabil Elderkin, 2010, US/Uganda



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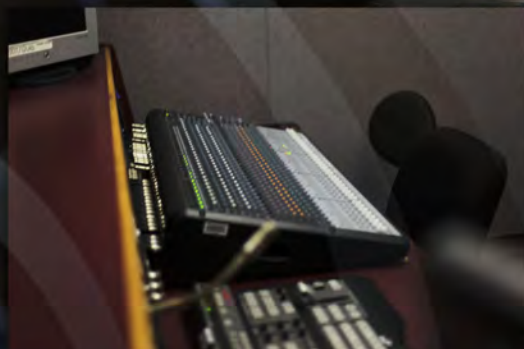
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